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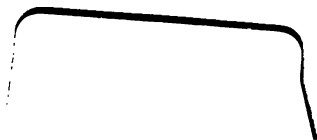
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KING LAZARUS



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KING LAZARUS.



KING LAZARUS.

A Novel.

BY
LEITH DERWENT,

AUTHOR OF "OUR LADY OF TEARS."

"Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere,
Destroyer and Preserver!"

SHELLEY.

"Oh! breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade
Where cold and unhonoured his relics are laid;
Sad, silent, and dark be the tears that we shed——"

MOORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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KING LAZARUS.



CHAPTER I.

ISABEL.

“LOUIS!”

It was a cry of surprise and gladness, the tone that of a sister startled by the unexpected appearance of a long-lost brother. As the figure in the shadow raised its head, there was heard the sudden rustle of a dress; then a pair of bracelets flashed in the moonlight, and two white hands clasped themselves quickly over the young man's eyes. “Now, *mon officier*,” the girl said, joyously, “tell me the name of the Prussian who has captured you?”

“Miss Isabel Cameron, I suppose,” was the reply.

Simple as were the words, they seemed to startle her who listened to them. She recoiled a step or two without speaking; and, turning round, the young man saw her dart hastily away from him and up some steps that led towards the château. In a very few seconds she reappeared, however, and came fearlessly towards him. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" she asked, haughtily.

The other did not immediately answer; and for perhaps a minute the two stood looking curiously at each other. "Are you not going to make a target of me, then?" the intruder asked, at last."

"Will you tell me who you are, and what you are doing here, and how it happens that you know my name? You speak English well—are you a Prussian?"

"No, Miss Cameron, I am an Englishman."

"An Englishman! Yes; I thought you spoke our language too well to be a German. Perhaps, then, you come from Captain Roland?" As she said this, she came a step nearer to him.

"From my cousin Louis? No, I have not heard from him for months."

"Your cousin Louis! Are you Henry Clifford?"


"So Louis would tell you if he were here."

"How silly of me not to have guessed as much! But why did you not tell me so at once, when I asked you who you were?"

"I was curious, perhaps, to see if you would try a shot at me."

"You thought I would have missed you, no doubt. Look, Mr. Clifford—at that fig, I mean, hanging there, almost the only one left on the tree. I can put a bullet through it from here, I think, even with only this cheating moonlight to take aim by."

She was already on the point of firing when a sudden thought seemed to make her hesitate. "No," she said, checking herself, "my aunt might hear me and be frightened. Come in, please, and let me tell Maman Alison how near I was to depriving her of a nephew. I would not have given much for either your chance or the



fig's of escaping a bullet, if I had tried a shot at one of you."

"So you thought the Prussians were upon you, I suppose," said Clifford, as the two walked away towards the château. "Or did you take me merely for a stray thief?"

"Why, if I had not noticed that you spoke English like a native, I might have taken you for a deserter from either the French or the Germans, and fired without much ceremony. Excuse me, Mr. Clifford, for saying so, but it was very foolish of you not to tell me your name at once. Suppose that I had blown your brains out?"

"I don't know that I attach much importance to them," said Clifford. "Not that I have come to France simply to put myself in the way of a bullet; but I think of joining the French army, and a bullet from that revolver of yours—a strange toy for a lady!—would surely be as pleasant as one from a Prussian needle-gun," he added, gallantly.

"How old are you?" she said, stopping and looking at him steadily. "Three and twenty!"

"About a year younger."

"And you talk of putting yourself in the way of a bullet much in the tone in which Solomon at eighty might have complained, 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit,' or Macbeth at five and fifty have groaned out, 'I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun!' If you were a countryman of mine, I should tell you frankly that I felt rather ashamed of you. I wish Louis had been here, to tell you in the words of gallant old Longfellow—

'Be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate.'"

"A countryman of yours," said the other, without paying much heed to the quotation. "I suppose, then, as your name would imply, you are a Scotchwoman?"

"A Scotch lassie you should say, Mr. Clifford. In my country a girl must be a little older than I am before she thinks of calling herself a woman," the girl said, smiling. "Yes, I was born somewhere

between Maidenkirk and John o' Groats; and lived, when I was a child, within sight of some of the highest of the Highland hills."

"I had rather that you had been born and bred within hearing of Bow Bells, I confess. I can't say that, as a rule, I like the Scotch."

"So civilly as that '*As a rule*' came in! Does your English sultanship mean that, for reasons unknown, you are graciously pleased in the present instance to make an exception to your rule, and to pardon your handmaiden the ignominy of her birth? I'm afraid my patriotism won't allow of my being excepted at the expense of my country. You and I will never be very good friends, I fear. Besides, if you dislike the Scotch, I simply detest the English."

"'Thy exquisite reason, fair lady,' " said the young man, borrowing from Sir Toby Belch.

"Oh, if you fling mangled sentences from Shakspeare at me, I can easily pelt back in kind. Why, as poor Sir Andrew says,

‘I have no exquisite reason for’t; but I have reasons good enough’—in the first place, that the English are so horribly conceited.”

“But the Scotch far outdo us in conceit. You believe yourselves the most remarkable nation under the sun.”

“Then,” said the girl, without taking any direct notice of the rejoinder, “as a natural corollary from your conceit, you are the rudest people on the face of the earth. One would imagine, from your talk and manners, that every Englishman went in his boyhood on an expedition to the North Pole, and took lessons in breeding from the bears there.”

“Yes, I admit that we are not the politest people in the world,” said the other, laughing. “For my own part, I’m a perfect Orson; but then I had the misfortune to be born just upon the borders, and to live for the first fourteen years of my life in the close neighbourhood of the Scotch.”

“Oh, I don’t wonder you dislike them, then. The constant contemplation of supe-

rior excellence—— Well, I won't end my hint. But what are the other items in your catalogue of our vices as a nation, please?"

"*Place aux dames*, if you'll allow me, Miss Cameron. When you have kindly catalogued all the faults and follies of the English for me——"

"*All* the faults of the English, did you say? The list would last from now till doomsday. I sometimes think the Recording Angel must have a special ledger—with no credit side to the account—in which he debits you English from day to day with your breakages of the commandments—more in number than any other three nations in Europe have charged against them."

"You except the Scotch, surely? To judge by the way your countrymen treat the Tenth Commandment, one would say that they had struck out the 'not' and the 'nors' from it, and turned the 'shalt not covet anything that is his' into 'covet everything that is his.'"

“You mean, I suppose, that there are a good many Scotchmen in England; and that these settlers often thrive at the expense of the aboriginal inhabitants? And what does that prove, pray, but that the doctrine of compensation holds good with regard to nations as well as individuals, and that God has made the poorer country of the two the richer in brains? If I may say so, without giving too much offence to your susceptible patriotism, the wealth of England a little reminds me of Swift’s sarcasm, ‘You may see what God Almighty thinks of riches, since he bestows them on the meanest of mankind.’”

“The meanest of mankind, Miss Cameron? Not so mean but that we could produce a Shakspeare and a Bacon. I think it would puzzle you to name two Scotchmen worthy to have mended quills for them.”

“A Bacon, do you say? You are unlucky in your instances; you forget, surely, that Bacon quite bears out the character I was giving of the English. ‘The wisest,

brightest, *meanest* of mankind'—I know my Pope, you see."

"And Burns and Scott? No one—no Englishman, at least—will ever suspect the first of having been the wisest of mankind, or declare that the second was the brightest. But I suppose you will tell me that Burns is the first lyric poet of modern times, and Scott a prose Homer, equal to the Greek in the art of narrative, and superior to him in knowledge of human nature?"

"No, I'll only say that in my opinion no English novelist has yet appeared equal to Sir Walter; and that poor Robert Burns was a glorious fellow, over whose grave I would like to put as epitaph two lines of Whittier's—

'Of all sad words of tongue and pen,
The saddest are these—It might have been.'

We Caledonians have a greater name in our literature than either Burns or Scott. We have given the world the greatest man that it has seen since Shakspeare—his converse in genius and temperament—but fit not only for mending his pens—fit to

stand side by side with him on the topmost height of Parnassus. I don't for a moment expect that you will agree with me, but depend on it future centuries will."

"The greatest man the world has seen since Shakspeare! If you mean the author of 'Sartor Resartus' and 'The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell'——?"

"I do; I mean Thomas Carlyle."

"Why, then, you'll be sorry to hear that I don't admire Carlyle."

"Sorry!—I'm delighted to hear it. It seems to me that he was not made for the English—he was made for ourselves and the Americans. When an Englishman says anything sensible to me about Carlyle, I always look at the creature as Balaam, I suppose, may have looked at an animal made in his likeness, and murmur to myself, '*Mon âne parle, et même il parle bien!*' There, Mr. Clifford!"

"So you grudge that any but Scotchmen and Americans should think highly of Carlyle! I'm sorry for it, for I was going to confess to you that I don't admire him,

only because I think him too great a man for such a homage. You would not want me to *admire* Mont Blanc, I suppose, if I were standing at the foot of it? I can't admire such intellect as Carlyle's—I think of it with worship and reverence. You, I see, look on him as a sort of Northern Light, the especial property of the Scotch; but to me he seems a sun, hung up, like Shakspeare, to give light to the universe. There, Miss Cameron."

"So you do, then, think him a great man?" she said more earnestly.

"I think him a Colossus. He bestrides the world of mind as no man has done since Shakspeare. I don't stop, when my theme is such a giant as Carlyle, to consider that he was born a Scotchman. Titans like him are above the accidents of nationality."

"Yes, in the sense of what they say, perhaps; but it depends very much on their nationality as to how they say it. Carlyle would have had as royal a mind, no doubt, even if he had been born an Englishman; but would he" she laughed, blushed

slightly, and interrupted herself. "While I am talking patriotic metaphysics to you here, I forget that you are all this while on the outside of the château," she said, "Come in, and let me prepare my aunt for seeing you,—your sudden appearance would surprise her as much as it does me to find that you are an Englishman, and yet can understand Carlyle; and her health is not in a state to bear any shock."

"What delightful quarrels you and I will have over our national prejudices," she went on, pushing back a door that admitted the visitor to the dimly-lighted entrance-hall of the silent château. "You must not say anything to Aunt Alison against Scotland, remember;—she never likes to hear her native country spoken ill of; and just now she is melancholy, and in very weak health;—but with me you shall abuse the Scotch to your heart's content; and in return I'll tell you what I think of the English."

"And what *do* you think of the English? Honestly, Miss Cameron."

"Why, I think—— François! Marie!"

she called, interrupting herself, and running to the foot of the old-world staircase that wound darkly upwards a yard or two from where they stood. "François, *mon vieux*, écoutez-vous? Why, I think," she said, when a sleepy voice had replied to her call, and she had commanded, "Descendez, donc!"—"I think St. Paul has drawn your national character excellently. 'He is proud, knowing nothing,' sketches an Englishman to the life."

"And your own countrymen? Was not 'Proud as a Scot' a proverb ages before either you or I had a country to quarrel about?"

"Oh, Scottish pride and English are as different as light and darkness, or as patriotism and egotism. The Scotchman's thought is of his country—the Englishman's is of his precious self. If two Bruces or Lindsays were to meet somewhere far away from home—in Equatorial Africa, say, or on the top of Mount Ararat,—the fact that they were compatriots would be sufficient introduction; and each

would do what he could to be of service to the other."

"And would not two Englishmen do just the same, under the circumstances?"

"Oh, not they!—'Smith, Smith,' each of them would murmur,—Smith or Jones, as the case might be—'Now who the'—Prince of Darkness—'is this fellow, I wonder?' Ah! here is old François, at last; looking as if he wondered very much who *you* are, and where on earth I picked you up." She turned to the old servant, and gave him some instructions. "Follow him, if you please; and he will show you to your room—While you get rid of that shocking coating of dust, that gives you the look of a fugitive French hero who has run all the way from Metz,—we are afraid that Louis must be shut up in Metz; we hear nothing from him—I'll find our aunt—how curious it seems that we should be related to her, and not to each other!—and tell her that her nephew is here." She walked away a step or two; and then glanced over her

shoulder at him. "And so," she said, in a voice more serious than her tone had as yet been during their conversation, "you have come to France to the war, you say?"

CHAPTER II.

EXTRACTS FROM A JOURNAL—(II.) “OMNES
GURGITES TUI.”

“OPENING, last night, one half of my diamond-paned and curiously shuttered casement, I sat for a while looking on the midnight heaven of Southern France, and thinking how like was that blue immensity to a heavenly Mediterranean; and how cluster after cluster of stars shone out of it as in the form of innumerable Grecian Archipelagos, the isles whereof were formed, not of soil and rock, but of diamond, with here and there some planet gleaming down on me like a celestial Sicily or Cyprus. It was Byron, I remembered, presently, from whom I was plagiarizing. I have not the fondness for his poetry which might seem

inevitable to my youth and temperament ; and my heart-strings vibrate to the voice of Shelley as the louder tones of his contemporary can never stir them. Is it because we surfeit ourselves with Byron in early youth that he palls on us in after life ? At seventeen, I could repeat the ‘ Siege of Corinth ’ from end to end ; at two and twenty, half a dozen fragments of a few lines each represent my recollections of the poem. Something in the aspect of the untroubled azure above me suggested to me last night, however,—first, the image of a heavenly Mediterranean, the repose of which no storm-wind ever frets ; and then that Byron had written in the piece I speak of,—


‘ Blue the sky
Spreads, like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright,
Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turned to earth without repining,
Nor wished for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray ! ’

“ Well, I, for one, have many a night sat in the dear old Wastdale garden, and talked

to Daisy of the shining worlds above us, without either boy or girl wishing that some kind angel would look out suddenly from the Invisible, and proffer to us the loan of a pair of snowy wings, wherewith to soar as high as Vega or the stars that belt Orion. We were two foolish children then ; and the glamour of childhood was upon our eyes, and made us see earth as a Paradise. I sometimes think—and if ever I give the fancy to the world others may be found to think with me—that Fairyland is just as real as the earth we live on ; and the chronicles we call fairy stories truer, and pregnant with a deeper meaning, than half the histories, ancient and modern, that drive the student at last to wonder whether when men take to writing annals they first of all cover Truth up in her well.

“ It was surely a poet—a man, that is, to whom God has given an eye to see, and a heart to interpret, and a tongue wherewith to speak wise parables—that told how children are snatched away in their sleep from the cradles wherein their parents have

laid them ; and being wakened by a sound of music, find round them faces that seem happy, and halls splendidly adorned, and spread as if for a banquet. A little while, and the charm that the fairies have woven about their prisoner begins to dissolve ; and what seemed music reveals itself as a wail of misery ; while the laughing faces writhe in torture, and for a banqueting-hall there is a dungeon, and for delicious fare a pitcher of water and a crust. Is not the mythus too plainly the story of our birth and childhood ? Are not we, too, snatched by invisible hands from the nothingness that is at once our sleep and our cradle ; and do we not wake presently to the sight of earth, and conceive that it is heaven ? I have heard of men and women (of a very few, to be sure) who have looked on life with credulous eyes as late as the age of five and twenty ; and who at thirty were perhaps but just beginning to perceive that the beauty of the world and of existence was a vision, born of the magic of youth, and destined, like youth itself, to fade away,



and be remembered as we remember a happy dream. But with the majority of us the wakening is an earlier one.

“When the children that the fairies had stolen outgrew the enchantment wrought upon them, and saw that what they had taken for a palace was the most miserable of prisons, we learn that they made desperate efforts to escape from the captivity in which until now they had dwelt delighted. We of the family of Adam,—children all of us, whether our days be one month or fourscore years,—do not we, too, grow desperate in our discontent when the spell passes from eye and heart, and earth resolves itself to a prison-house, and life to captivity therein? Not a few of us seize forthwith on pistol or steel, or perhaps a grain or two of poison; and appealing wildly to the talisman we have made choice of, are transported suddenly into the unknown regions that lie beyond the mysterious void we speak of as Death. Others, who are of the true dust the weak are fashioned of, raise the cry of a child whose toys no

longer please it ; and so continue bemoaning their lot until Azrael hushes the querulous complaint. It speaks well for the number of this second sect that Byron, of all our English poets, should, if the testimony of the printing-press may be accepted, be the one most widely read.

“I began this entry by speaking of my last night’s star-gazing ; and am now arrived, by way of Fairyland, at a talk of suicide. If ever any other eye than mine should search these pages, it will wonder to find me declaring that the themes in question evolved themselves one from the other by the most natural process of selection possible. But a year or two ago, I and my lost Daisy dwelt in Fairyland. Many an evening have we sat under the old apple tree in the garden, dreaming, the boy of poetry, the girl of love ; and both of us confident that when we winged away from Wastdale we should find the world beyond an Eden. If, in those days, we looked up to the stars, it was but to praise their beauty ; never to wish that we could flee to their serene

shelter and be at rest. Last night, however, as my eyes were lifted to the other eyes which shone out of Heaven upon me, and I sat longing that they could give to my regard something of the serenity of theirs, the Devil (I suppose, at least, that it was he) whispered to me all at once that at that very moment, perhaps, my sister and another were watching the stars as I was watching them, and that her head might be resting on his breast. I don't know but that if a pistol had been near me at the moment, I should have shot myself. O, the sting of thinking that but five short weeks ago her lips were pure, and now what kisses have shamed them! Has he taken her to the New World, I wonder; or are they hidden away in one of the more out-of-the-way corners of the Old? I have sought them through Italy and half Switzerland; but it seems that Heaven will refuse me the joy—yes, it would be the joy—of killing him.

In “Don Giovanni,” let the piece be given under what conditions it may, there

is always, as well as the *roué* himself, his lackey, Leporello. I thought of that one morning, ten days ago, as I sat waiting at the office. Some one presently came in; but it was not Munden; it was Mr. Hodgson Sprott. He started as he saw me, whom he had probably supposed to be at that moment in Cumberland; but quickly recovering himself, and coming forward, "What, you here, Clifford?" he said, insolently. "I thought you had got your notice to quit."

"From whom?" I asked. "From Munden?"

"Yes; hasn't he written to you? He doesn't intend to renew your three months' engagement—it's out on Tuesday, I believe. In fact, Clifford, I'm already appointed sub-editor in your place."

"I congratulate you," I said, quietly. "And now, Mr. Sprott, will you have the goodness to give me the present address of Lord Ralston."

"You want to write to him, do you? I don't think you'll find that much will

come of the move. Ralston did not know, any more than Munden, of the associates and the politics you cultivate, when he engaged you.'

" 'I don't understand you, Mr. Sprott'

" 'Well, you'll understand me better, perhaps, when I tell you that Munden has seen the old schoolmaster at Kensington who was your last employer. A precious character he gives you. "Gets his politics," he said, "from Bradlaugh ; and his morals from Tom Paine and Voltaire, and the devil himself, for what I know——" Never saw Munden so taken aback. He and I talked the matter over, when the old fellow was gone. You know Archer's a strong Tory, I suppose ?'

" 'How did the old fellow, as you call him, come to make the acquaintance of Mr. Munden ?'

" 'Why, circumstances brought them together, I suppose. All I know is, that I hadn't any hand in it.'

"I saw by his look that he was lying. However, that he should have done me

this ill turn was of as little consequence to me as the fact that, having manœuvred me out of my appointment, he was about to step into my place. I had one knowledge and one purpose in my mind that swallowed up all others.


“ ‘ Will you give me Lord Ralston’s address ? ’ I asked him for the second time. ‘ Having got that, Mr. Sprott, I will take my leave of you. ’

“ He pretended to be searching on the desk before him as I spoke. ‘ Ah ! here it is, ’ he said, appearing not to have heard my question, and selecting one from the heap of letters that lay there. ‘ I thought that Archer had sent it to you. ’

“ I tore open the letter that he handed to me, and read :—

“ ‘ DEAR SIR,

“ ‘ You made a slight mistake when you undertook to sub-edit a journal like “ Men and Women. ” A St. Giles’ Chronicle or Whitechapel Gazette would be more in your line, I fancy. I don’t require a fami-



liarity with the ways of Bradlaugh and his tag-rag, but a slight acquaintance with good society for the journal I conduct. Allow me to dispense with your services for the future, and to hand you a cheque for salary due to you.

" 'Yours very truly,

" 'ARCHER MUNDEN.'

"Enclosed was a cheque for a month's salary. I tore it to pieces, and flung them in Sprott's face. 'Why, you hound,' I said, 'don't you know what this is the price of? Where's the scoundrel whose lackey's lackey you are? Where's Don Juan, my good Leporello?'

"He backed away from me, as if he had feared that I was mad. 'What do you mean?' he stammered. 'I don't understand you, Clifford.'

"His surprise was so evidently genuine that I was forced to acquit him of all knowledge of my sister's shame. What had urged me to suspect him I don't know; but I was in a humour at the

moment to suspect him and Munden, and all the crawling creatures that earth ever spawned. 'If you are innocent of knowing anything of what I mean,' I said, 'so much the better for you. Give me Ralston's address, and let me go.'

"He took out the office address-book, and cast on me an eye that seemed apprehensive of some further violence on my part, as he opened it with trembling hands. 'Munden had a letter from him four or five days ago,' he said, hurriedly. 'Here's the hotel in the Engadine that it was dated from.'

"I copied down the address, and looked at him. 'What did he say in the letter?' I demanded.

"'Only that he was leaving Switzerland, and that Archer was not to write to him until he sent a fresh address. On my soul and honour, Clifford, he said no more.'

"I thanked him, and went away. I took the night-mail to the Continent, and hurried forward to the Engadine. Ralston

had been there, I found, but had left eight days before. They gave me his address as Venice ; his letters were to be directed ' Poste Restante ' there, they said.

"She must have fled from home only about twenty-four hours before he left the Engadine. Where did she join him, I was left to wonder. There were no letters lying for him in Venice, when I got there ; nor could I light on a trace of her and him.

"I should have liked very well to have found him in Venice—that city which a brother-peer and *roué* called 'Gehenna of the Waters.' No fouler soul than his, surely, did the devil ever rake up to himself out of the slime of Venice. It seems but yesterday that Daisy was an innocent child, and lisping her prayers at our dead mother's knee ; and now what has he blighted her into ? A creature so giddily wicked, that he has but to write to her from the Continent, appointing a place of assignation, and she runs off to him, and

to her ruin. Heaven punish me, if it pleases, for the feeling; but I think I can never quite pardon her what she has done, unless I should hear that she is dead."

CHAPTER III.

METZ.

“HAVE you considered, M. le Maréchal, what an unhappy figure you will make in history?”

The man who spoke wore the simple uniform of a *capitaine du génie*; the shorter and stouter officer who listened to him was resplendent with decorations and gold lace. “Well,” this last said, biting at his moustache, “what will be said of me? Speak frankly, Captain Roland, if you please.”

“At the best, it will be charged against you, M. le Maréchal, that you shamefully delivered up a fortified place to the enemy, an act that the military laws of all countries declare punishable with death.”

Bazaine threw at the speaker a look

which evidently hinted, "You don't seem to fear facing a *peloton* much yourself, who take such a tone to me." "And the worst?" he asked.

"That you sold Metz to the Prussians."

The marshal sprang up furiously from the chair on which he was sitting. "I," he exclaimed—"I sell Metz! Who will dare to calumniate me with such an accusation?"

"History, your excellency."

"History?" echoed the marshal, "history, do you say?" He paced agitatedly up and down the apartment for a full minute; and then stopped just before the other, and pointed to a sword displayed conspicuously upon the wall. "The Emperor gave it to me," he said, "the day after Solferino. Who will believe that I, who won that sword so honourably, was traitor enough to keep it sheathed when it might have cut me a way out of Metz?"

"All France, if your excellency should unhappily give cause for such a belief."

"No, Captain Roland, not all France,

but only the France that is Republican and hotheaded, like yourself. Frenchmen who do justice to my situation will say only of me that I was not strong enough to conquer the impossible."

"The Prussians, then, are the impossible! Ah, what a doctrine for a marshal of France!" said Roland.

The taunt caused Bazaine to step towards the door, as if he intended ordering the arrest of him who had dared it. "Ah," he said, stopping, "you presume upon the disposition to mutiny you have helped in stirring up. 'Let him arrest me,' you tell yourself; 'and in ten minutes after the army have learned the reason, fifty thousand men will demand of him my release.' If I had shot you a month ago, young man, and some other agitators with you, I might to-day have an army, and not a disorderly mob. Yes, yes, I know very well that you are one of those who say continually to the men, 'Ah, if you would but down with the *gros bonnets*, and put us in their place, how soon we should all be out of Metz!'"

“Your excellency——”

“You deny it, then?” said the marshal, violently. “Oh yes, I can understand that you Republicans—you who are so candid in speaking of the faults of your superiors, may wish to be discreet about your own. Tell me, young man, did you not call, some three weeks ago, on General Changarnier?”

The young officer assented by a bow.

“What was it that you had to say to him?”

“I wished to say, ‘*Mon général*, if this body that is called an army were united to the soul that is called a leader, in three days we should have forced the Prussians to raise the siege.’ You have misunderstood me, M. le Maréchal, if you fear that I would lie to you,” the speaker went on, proudly. “I do not deny, even in presence of Marshal Bazaine himself, that I have wished sometimes I were commander of the army of Metz.”

“You would be such a fine new broom, of course, that you would sweep clean away

all traces of a siege? You would march upon Berlin, and beat the Prussian armies, one after the other, by the way?"

"I should try, at least, to find a way out of Metz," said Roland; "and either find it, or die in seeking it."

"Ah, bah—die in seeking it! My little Napoleon, a general who gets himself killed uselessly is not called a hero, but a dunce. Well, then, you acknowledge that you went to Changarnier in the hope of persuading him to plot against me; and that you have said many time to yourself—and a few times, no doubt, to your comrades—'Ah, if you or I, and not that miserable Bazaine, were at the head of this fine army, and entrusted with the task of breaking out of Metz!' Have you anything to say for yourself before I order you into arrest?"

"Nothing, your excellency, for myself."

"Then——"

"No, it is not of myself that I wish to speak; it is of France," the young man said, with animation. "What!—you are putting your sword to her throat, M. le

Maréchal, and I am not even to tell you that you are about to commit a crime? You may shoot me to-morrow, if you please, but not the less I tell you to-day that if you capitulate you would yourself deserve to face a firing-party."

"If I capitulate! And what course is there left a general who commands such officers as yourself but to capitulate? Stop, no answer," the marshal went on, violently. "You have already forgotten your position and mine grossly enough without insulting me with advice."

"Ah, M. le Maréchal, if you would but remember both!"

"How, sir?" said Bazaine. "Talk like a brigand, if you choose, but no enigmas."

"If you would determine on a *sortie* for to-morrow, and send me to-night to select the point of the Prussian lines to be attacked?"

"And to-morrow night the Prussian head-quarters would be in Metz. No, no; history may blame me, if it chooses, for staying shut up here until the enemy had

starved me out; but it shall not say of me that I foolishly flung away thousands of brave lives."


"Better that than fling all France away. Your excellency gives the enemy everything when you give them Metz."

"Give them! I *give* them! You have a bad choice of words, it must be allowed, Captain Roland."

"I speak plainly, M. le Maréchal, that is all. It is not the custom, I know, to do so in Metz. Men find it difficult to understand whether it is the Republic or the Empire with us; and their uncertainty makes them set a guard on their tongues."

"So much the better," said the marshal. "It does not become a soldier to meddle with politics. *Parbleu!* I wish I could teach that lesson to a certain captain of engineers."

The other looked at him without answering. "What do you mean by that look?" Bazaine said, speaking very irritably. "Do you know, you have very much the appear-



ance of a plotter who wonders whether his schemes have been detected."

The young officer drew himself up, with the air of a man who understood that the supreme moment of the interview was at hand. "And if I conspire," he said, "it is because my superiors have set me the example."

"What do you say?" cried the marshal.

"I say, M. le Maréchal, that I have sought only to save my country; but that others are seeking her ruin. I say that if the army cannot decide whether to cry '*Vive la République!*' or '*Vive Napoleon III!*' I, for my part, am convinced that Metz is still a fortress of the Empire."

"Yes, yes," said the marshal, "I can understand that you would like to be thought capable of penetrating the sentiments of your superiors. You see well enough that I, a man of the sword, am not in love with these gentlemen of the law and the press who have usurped power in Paris; and you tell yourself——"

"That in hating Favre and Gambetta,

and the rest of the men of September 4th, your excellency forgets sometimes to be a Frenchman."

"What do you say?" Bazaine cried, for the second time.

"I would say, if I dared," said Roland, "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*; but the words would sound too like an insult."


"Speak French, *parbleu!*" said the marshal. "You forget, I think, what my younger days were."

"It is difficult, your excellency, to translate such words into French."

"They mean, then——?"

"Freely translated, they mean," said Roland, "that a marshal of France ought to beware of accepting a gift offered him by Bismarck, even if that gift be the return of the Emperor to the Tuileries."

Marshal Bazaine threw a glance around him, as if he feared that the walls of the room had ears. "Speak lower," he said, apprehensively. The emotion was past in a moment, however; and he regained that command of himself which the young



officer's daring words had for a moment disturbed. "A fine bargain this, *ma foi*," he said, "that you say Bismarck wants me to make with him. And what is it the Prussians would have me do, in return for their promise to restore the Empire? Open the gates of Metz to them, no doubt."

"Of Metz first, M. le Maréchal, and afterwards of Paris."


"Of Paris!—the gates of Paris! You are mad, then, it seems, as well as mutinous. What have I to do with Paris?"

"You have the key of it, M. le Maréchal?"

The marshal began to comprehend. "Ah, yes," he said, "you mean that if Metz falls Paris falls also. Let the Republic look to that. I am the soldier of——" He stopped, and glanced sharply at his hearer.

"Of the Empire," said Roland, coldly. "Yes, M. le Maréchal, I am aware of that; and I am aware, too, that you have a policy altogether Imperial."

"*Ma foi*, monsieur, you who know so much can, of course, explain to me the nature of this policy?"



"Your excellency permits me to speak frankly?"

"Yes, Captain Roland," Bazaine said, smiling strangely. "I like frankness,—it is a rare quality under a Republic."

"Will your excellency allow me to ask you a single question?"

"Which is——?"

"Do you think that you are a match for Bismarck as a diplomat?"

"*Parbleu!*—a diplomat. You read strange things, then, it seems, young man, in the mind of François Bazaine."

"Ambition, your excellency, an ambition of interpreting the future. Allow me to say to you that you interpret it badly."

"Interpret! How interpret?"

"M. le Maréchal flatters himself apparently that when Metz is in the hands of the Prussians, and the last of the Imperial armies has surrendered, the taking of Paris will soon follow."

Bazaine shrugged his shoulders. "*Après?*" he inquired.

"A peace; and the cession of Alsace and

part of Lorraine, and the payment of a war indemnity. King William—I am speaking plainly, M. le Maréchal; and Bismarck, we all know, does not speak plainly, but is as ambiguous as an oracle,—King William will require, as a preliminary of peace, that it shall be made with those who made the war, and that France shall receive Cæsar back as a gift from Prussia. When the Emperor is again at the Tuileries, his first appointment will be that of Marshal Achille Bazaine as Minister of War, and he will also, in gratitude, name him a *duc*. If my grade in the army were somewhat nearer to that of your excellency, I might perhaps understand how a marshal of France can covet such a title as that of Duc de Metz.”

“Sir,” said Bazaine, going nearer to him, “do you know what you are saying?”

“This dream of your excellency’s,” continued Roland, without paying any attention to the interruption, “will last till the Republic shall have beaten back her enemies across the Rhine, or compelled them to an honourable peace. Your title will then be

whatever history may give you—that of traitor, perhaps.”

“Take care, young man—take care!”

“Your excellency said to me, ‘Speak with frankness.’”

“Yes, sir—yes; but now you speak with insolence. And what if these enemies of the Republic should prove too strong for her to drive them back across the Rhine? What if in a very few weeks Moltke and Bismarck have her by the throat?”

“M. le Maréchal will remember, perhaps, that in the old legends in which men are represented as having dealings with Satan, he who sold his soul was sometimes cheated of the price. What will Bismarck seek in concluding a peace? To deprive France of territory and fortresses. If a Republic will yield them up to him, he will not spend a man or a thaler in trying to restore the Empire.”

Again Bazaine smiled strangely.

“Your excellency says to yourself, I perceive, ‘Let the Republic conclude a shameful peace; and when the French

armies return from captivity, they will bring back with them an Emperor. Undeceive yourself, M. le Maréchal. A Republic that concludes peace may be upset, indeed; but those who upset it will not be inclined to put the Man of Sedan in its place."

As the marshal listened to this speech, his countenance lost the look of sneering incredulity that it had assumed, and became disturbed. He stepped up close to Roland and laid a hand upon his arm. "And what would you, and those of your comrades who think with you, have me do?" he said.

"We would have you attempt a sortie. We ask you to lead us out of Metz."

"Useless—a mere wanton waste of life. The attempt would end in a second Sedan."

"Your excellency is not perhaps aware that there are officers—myself included—who have already been out of Metz."

"You have been out of Metz?" cried Bazaine.


"And had reconnoitred a part of the Prussian lines when I was captured by the enemy."

"You were captured by the enemy, do you say? But how is it, then, that you are here?"

"As I had disguised myself in a blouse and a pair of coarse trousers, I was taken for a poor fellow forced out of Metz by hunger, and driven back with a threat of shooting me if I renewed the attempt. Give me leave to try another visit to the enemy to-night; and if I am alive to-morrow at noon, your excellency will then know at what point a sortie may be made with the greatest prospect of success."

"You maintain, then, that there is a prospect of success?"

"I maintain, M. le Maréchal, that if I were in your place, ten days would not have passed before I should have fallen in trying to break through the Prussian lines, or the siege of both Metz and Paris would be raised. Ah, *mon général*," continued the young man, with an emotion in his voice that he had not before shown during the interview, "believe me, it is better to die for one's country than to ruin her. You



are offended that I have spoken to you as captains of engineers are not accustomed to speak to marshals of France. Think that it is not I that speak; think that France, our common mother, implores you through me to be faithful to your trust, and you will forgive me what I have said."

Bazaine stood looking at the speaker for a while in silence. "Captain Roland," he said, at last.

"Your excellency?"

"You will go this evening and attempt the reconnaissance you propose. The report that you bring me will decide me whether to name you a colonel, or order you into arrest."

Roland bowed, and turned to leave. "If your excellency does not see me by noon to-morrow," he said, "I shall be dead or a prisoner."


"A prisoner! You will be a prisoner? But I thought that an officer who renders himself as prisoner, whether marshal or captain, is in your eyes a man disgraced."

“Who *voluntarily* renders himself, your excellency.”

“He who does not so render himself is likely to be shot down.”

“Therefore, if I do not present myself before your excellency by the time I have named, you may consider that I am dead.” The young officer bowed again, and left.

A malignant sneer writhed the marshal's features, as he stood for a moment listening to Roland's footsteps in the ante-room. “Hum!” he muttered, sitting down and drawing some papers towards him, “will the Prussians serve me instead of a *peloton*, I wonder? Nothing but the knock of a bullet will ever quiet down a brain like that.”



CHAPTER IV.

CHATEAU ROLAND.

ONE evening about the middle of November, Miss Isabel Cameron, as she sat gazing into a clear wood fire, was disturbed from her contemplation of a fancied Stirling Castle, by the hasty entrance of François and Marie, the two old domestics of the household. "The wolves! the wolves!" the woman gasped out, breathlessly. "Oh, mademoiselle, the wolves!" François said nothing, but he cast an anxious look at a rusty musket that he carried.

"Well, where are the wolves?" the girl asked, without rising. "Not inside the château, I hope."

"Outside, mademoiselle—outside in the courtyard there. François heard one of

the brutes scraping with his paws at the door, and whining."

The window of the room commanded a view of the courtyard referred to, and Isabel went to it, and threw it open. "I see no wolves," she said. "Stop! there is something lying in the snow." She leaned out till she was almost in danger of falling, and looked keenly at the dark mass that had attracted her attention. "A wolf!" she said, after a moment's scrutiny; "no, it must be a man. Your wolf, François, seems to me to have a French soldier's uniform. Go down, and see what the poor creature wants. I hope he may have come with a message from Louis. If Louis is alive, poor fellow," she added to herself, "he must be in Germany by now."

"Mais, ma'amselle," objected François.

"You don't mean to tell me, surely, that with that great musket of yours, you are afraid of a poor creature who seems too weak to stand?"

"But, ma'amselle, if it should be a trick. The man is a robber, perhaps; and when

we open the door to him his companions who are hiding will rush in, and cut all our throats."

"My good François, robbers would not need the help of stratagem to get into such a house as this. And then, who ever heard, even in war-time, of there being robbers in the Cevennes?"

François stood looking from his mistress to the door, and hesitating.

"Oh, oh, *mon vieux!*" the girl said, laughing, "do you want me to protect you? There, then," she added, rising, and taking something from her desk, "I have five men's lives in my hand. Bring your musket to make up the half-dozen; and let Marie come with us to unbolt the door. A strange pair of Samaritans the poor fellow lying there will think us."


With timorous unwillingness Marie's wrinkled hands tugged slowly at the bolts and turned the key. There was no rush of banditti as the creaking door swung back upon its hinges; but a head lifted itself feebly from the snow on which it had

been pillowed, and the girl's quick ears caught a half-articulate "Isabel."

She knelt down quickly by the figure in the snow. "Oh, Louis!" she said; "and is this how you come back to us?"

The deathly face lifted itself a little nearer to hers as she spoke, and she saw that Roland was making an effort to rise. "No, no, Louis!" she said, preventing him. Then, with François helping her, she exerted the strength of which her tall, fine figure gave promise to carry the half-fainting man into the house. "Quick, François," she said, "some brandy. Marie, run for some warm water, and a sponge. See that neither of you says anything to Madame Roland."

In a few minutes a bad cut upon the forehead had been dressed, and then, while François and Marie stripped off the patient's tattered uniform and carried him to bed, Isabel disappeared, and returned presently with a plate of soup. "You reach us, you see," she said, sitting down by her cousin's bedside, "just in time for dinner. Tell me



if this *potage* is not better than any you got in Metz?" She lifted a spoonful to his lips, and he swallowed it with the avidity of a man to whom food had of late been denied. "My mother," he said, in a hoarse whisper, "where is my mother, Isabel?"

"Asleep in her room, I think."

"Don't let her see me yet."

"Oh, no; Marie and I will take care of that. Poor *maman*, she is in sad anxiety about you. But the soup is only enough to awaken your appetite, I see. Run to the kitchen, Marie, and bring me some of the *ragoût* you are cooking. You could eat it, Louis, could you not? Oh, there's no need to say 'Yes,' there's an answer in each of your eyes."

She talked on cheerfully while watching her patient eat morsels of the tempting stew; but when Roland had laid his head back upon the pillow and fallen asleep, a sad enough look came into her face as she sat watching by him. "So," she murmured, stooping towards the young man, and gently

touching his forehead with her lips, "this—*this* is the end of all your dreams!"

He was still sleeping quietly when, after swallowing a hasty meal, Isabel went up to his mother's room. Madame Roland, cold, although enveloped in shawls, sat in a large easy chair placed near a stove. "Is that you, Isabel? What have you been doing with yourself, my child, all the evening?" she said, feebly.

The girl made some evasive answer; and busied herself in arranging the invalid's wrappings. "Did you like the dish that Marie brought you, *maman*? I cooked it while she was busy with the *ragoût*."

"You are a much better cook than Marie, my child. Your husband will find a treasure in you, for you are both a good girl and a clever housewife. Yes, it quite gave me an appetite. Has Antoine brought me a newspaper, as he promised?"

"Not yet, *maman*. The snow is so thick on the ground to-day that I suppose he did not like to venture up from Uzès."

"I wish he had come," the elder lady

sighed, wearily. "Oh, Bella, I begin to fear very much that my boy is dead. If he were only a prisoner, the Prussians could not have refused to let him write a letter to his mother."

"But, dearest, how could a letter reach us? And then, it is not a week yet since we heard that Metz had surrendered."

"And the very next night after the news came I dreamed that I saw Louis lying dead—shot, Isa—shot through the heart."

"Ah, but *maman*, dreams go by contraries, you know. Yours means, then, that Louis has escaped from Metz, and will soon be at home with us again."

The invalid only sighed, and shook her head.

"You are a little feverish to-night," the girl said, putting her cool hand to the other's forehead. "Shall I sing you to sleep with one or two Scotch songs?"

"Sing the 'Land o' the Leal' to me, then, my dear."

Isabel complied with some reluctance, for she feared the effect of that farewell

to earth upon her aunt. The girl had a delightful voice—not very powerful, but charmingly sweet and touching. As she sang—

“We’ll meet and aye be fain
In the land o’ the leal,”

the tears came in a gush from the poor mother’s eyes. “Oh, my bairn—my bairn,” she sobbed. “Oh yes, I shall meet you there, Louis.”

“Dearest,” the girl said, kissing her, “you will see him in this very room yet, I am sure.” She waited a moment, and then began to sing softly, “When the sheep are in the fauld, and the kye at hame.”

At the line, “I saw my Jamie’s ghaist—I couldna think it he,” she substituted the name Louis for that of the sailor-lover of the sweet old ballad, and then stopped. “Something tells me, *maman*, that that is what you will say when you see Louis again,” she said.

There was an indescribable revelation in her tone of voice that made the listener start, and grasp her by the arm. “Oh,

Isabel," she said, "have you heard of him ? "

"Yes, dearest, I have heard of him."

"And he is alive ? "

"Alive and safe, dear aunt."

"But why does he not come to me, then ? Is he a prisoner ? "

"No, not a prisoner ; but he has been badly wounded. Don't look frightened, *maman*—he is out of all danger now."

"How do you know ? Who brought you this good news ? "

"A soldier, *maman*—a man of Louis' regiment who had escaped from Metz."

"Where is he ? Let me see him ? "

"In the morning, aunty, please. Poor fellow, he was so worn out with his journey here that he fell asleep almost before he had eaten the dinner I gave him. You will not have me wake him to-night, will you ? "

"Bring him to me early, then, Isabel."

"As soon as you are awake, dear aunt. And now let me try to sing you to sleep again, *maman*, please."

Something that almost might have been a ghost, so very thin and bloodless was it, stole next morning, supported by Isabel Cameron, to the invalid's bedside. The girl had prepared her for the interview, and the mother knew that it was Louis himself whom she was to greet. "My son, my son," Alison Roland gasped, recognizing the changed face; "thank God that He has given you back to me!" The tears that were in her eyes dimmed them for a time to the thinness and ghastly pallor of those familiar features; but she presently dashed them away for a moment, and in the next they had started to her eyes again, at beholding the change that suffering had wrought. "Oh, my poor boy, how ill you look!—how dreadfully you must have suffered! Where is it that you are wounded?" she said, anxiously.

Roland gave his cousin a glance that very plainly implied, "You should not have told her." "If I had not, your looks would," Isabel's eyes responded.

"A scratch, dearest mother,—a mere

scratch. I got it a month ago, and now it is almost healed."

"But that bandage round your forehead has blood upon it. How is it your wound still bleeds, if it is almost healed?"

"O, my forehead! That was done yesterday; I slipped in scrambling up to the château, and grazed it. It was in my side that the bullet struck me. Come, *maman*, you must have some breakfast."

"But your side, Louis, your side! Are you sure that the wound is healed?"

"Yes, all but healed; or will be in another week or two. But, my dear mother, how ill you look yourself! You have been fretting terribly about me, I can see. Ah, my darling, it is cruel for you that you have but one son, and that he is a soldier."

"But you have done with soldiering, Louis, for a long time now. You will not be fit to go back to the army before the spring, at least; and by that time there may be a peace."

"A peace, mother! Yes, if the Prussians

are driven back across the Rhine,—not unless. Gambetta is at the head of the National Defence now, remember.”

“Gambetta? The mounting spirit who left Paris in a balloon? He seems to me to be a man of more heart than head,” said Miss Cameron.

“Then you don’t do him justice; for he has some of the best of the qualities that fit a man to be at the head of affairs. Once let him be seconded by a general, instead of the miserable set of formal dunces that are about him at present, and even Bazaine’s treason will not prevent defeat from being converted into victory. ‘No surrender’ is his declaration of policy; and when Gambetta says ‘No surrender’ you may be certain that there will be none. I wish we had had a dozen men of his stamp in Metz.”

“How did you escape from Metz, Louis?” his cousin asked. “Of course, you have quite a romantic story to tell us of your adventures.”

“I did not escape from Metz.”

"How!—did the Prussians set you at liberty, then?"

"I was never a prisoner. What, Bella, have I roused your curiosity at last? Suppose I leave it ungratified until the end of the war?"

"Then he shall not hear the story that we have to tell him,—shall he, *maman*?"

"And what story can you have to tell me, I wonder."

"O, one that will interest you extremely. A fair exchange, Louis,—your history for our mystery."

"*Place aux dames*, then, Bella. Yours to begin with."

"What! and keep poor *maman* in suspense? See, how anxious she is to hear how you escaped from both the bullets of the Prussians and their prisons. Your story first, Louis, please."

"Yes, yes, Louis," said his mother; "your story first."

"My dear mother, I have really very little to tell you. I was foolish enough to think that Bazaine might after all have a

spark or two of patriotism in his cold heart ; and so I asked for an interview with him, and when I obtained it—— ”

“ You spoke to him, I suppose, not as a captain of engineers to a Marshal of France, but as a Republican to an Imperialist,” said Isabel.

“ You are wrong, Bella ; I spoke to him as one Frenchman to another. No, he did not order me into arrest,—though you smile as if you had fancied that that was the end of it ; he only gave me permission to absent myself from Metz for a few hours.”

“ To absent yourself from Metz ? ”

“ Yes ; to pay a visit to his friends, the Prussians—*incognito*, you understand ; I did not go out with white flag, and beat of drum. In plain words, it was a night *reconnaissance* ; and my object was to discover against what point of the Prussian lines it would be most advisable to direct an attempt to break out of Metz.”

“ And was this clever idea yours, or the marshal’s ? ”

"It was mine."


"Oh, then, one can do injustice even to Marshal Bazaine, it seems. I thought he might have profited by the history of King David and Captain Uriah,—that was all. Well; and the result of your expedition, Louis?"

"You saw it yesterday," said Roland, slightly touching his right side. "I was far enough away from Metz when I was fired at and hit," he continued; "and when I came to myself a little, I managed to crawl forward until I had got beyond the Prussian lines. They had believed me dead, no doubt; and so left me where I fell. A woman took me into her cottage, and nursed me——"

"I wish I could see her to thank her," said Madame Roland.

"And a week ago," the young officer continued, "I felt sufficiently recovered to start for home."

"My poor Louis," said his mother, pressing his hand; "what a fearful journey you must have had, my poor boy! You



look fitter to be in a sick-bed than to travel all those hundreds of miles."

"Well, *maman*, here I am; and Isabel must nurse us both. We will see, dearest, whether your face or mine will be the first to get back a little colour. And now for the story that you pretend is to interest me, Bella."

"Your friend and cousin, Henry Clifford, has been here and spent a week with us," said Isabel.

"Ah, Harry kept his promise, then! I was half afraid he had hardly meant to do so. Where is he, Bella?"

"I don't know; dead, perhaps," said Isabel. "He left us to try to join you in Metz."

"How long ago was that?" said Roland, anxiously.

"About two months back. There had been very unhappy and tragic occurrences in his family, it seems; and they had dejected him so that he talked as if his chief object in coming to France was to get himself killed out of the way as quickly as

possible. Poor fellow! perhaps he has succeeded by this time."

"How very coldly you say that, Isabel. What has he done to offend you?"

"Nothing; but I don't feel at home with young men of three-and-twenty who find their life a burden to them. And then, he seemed to have so many fine qualities that it made one quite angry to see him so morbid and Byronic."

"Harry may be just a little morbid at times; but he has nothing Byronic about him," said his cousin. "Were you a week in his company; and yet did not find out that it is Shelley that he worships?"

"O, I had not known him forty-eight hours before I knew that he idolized Shelley. I only said he was Byronic because one is in the habit of applying that term to men who profess to be sick of the world, and to hate all that are in it."

"And why should Clifford hate all that are in it?"

"Oh, on the Byronic principle that if one man does you an injury you are to avenge

it on all. There is a man in the world who has cruelly wronged him."

"What man? Did he tell you who it was?"

"No, he told me very little on the subject."

"You said just now that family misfortunes had affected him. What were they, do you know?"

"His grandfather's sudden and awful death, for one."

"What! on the Pillar Rock, I suppose. The poor old man! What else, Bella?"

"You must ask *maman* here for the rest; it was she that he told it to."

"Well, mother?" said Roland.

"He had lost his sister," said Madame Roland. "Ah, Louis, don't ask me how!"


CHAPTER V.

GAMBETTA, DICTATOR.

IN the December of 1870, the hopes of France appeared to centre themselves at Tours. Gambetta was there ; and when one named Gambetta, one named the Government of the National Defence. France had already begun to suspect that Trochu's plan for raising the siege of Paris was to pray daily and devoutly to the Virgin for a miracle ; and that Jules Favre's statesmanship went no further than the art of shedding tears, one in which lawyers and crocodiles have in all ages succeeded admirably ; and the nation doubted whether tears would soften Bismarck, or miracles succeed against Moltke. The fiery Marseillais was evidently a man of another stamp ; and looked for

the Gordian knot in which Prussian strategy had entangled his country to be cut by the swords of her children. While Léon Gambetta remained in power there was meaning in the "Not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses," of Favre.

Unfortunately, this heroic tribune, who possessed so nobly the faculty of animating his countrymen to resistance, had not the art of directing that resistance. As November passed on, and battle after battle was fought and lost, France woke by degrees to the perception that the deliverer upon whom she relied was destitute of military genius; and that Léon Gambetta, although he could call armies into existence, neither had ability to head them himself nor was happy in selecting others for that charge. With the advantage of numbers upon their side, the generals who owed their appointment to the Republican Dictator were every whit as badly beaten as the satraps of the Empire. After the defeat at Orleans, and the splitting in two of the army of the Loire, the discontent that had



for some time been everywhere gathering found loud expression in words, and in no city more loudly than in Tours.

On the night of December 9th, half a dozen parties of talkers were gathered drinking and arguing in a *café* not many hundred yards from the Tours Ministry of War. The principal speaker in the largest and most noisy group was a man of something less than five feet six in height, with a shrewd and expressive but remarkably ugly cast of features, nut-cracker nose and chin, and a droll obliquity of glance that prevented one at first sight from perceiving how very keen and piercing were his eyes. He was smoking furiously at a wooden pipe, the bowl of which was carved into an ingenious caricature of his own Punchinello face.

“So, so, Pipe en Bois,” one of the listeners to a harangue that had just been delivered by this goblin-like creature said, incredulously, “Gambetta has only to be with the army himself; and all will go well, eh?”

Pipe nodded dogmatically, and smoked on.

A number of the drinkers who surrounded him began to laugh. There were very few civilians in the group, which was made up chiefly of subaltern officers, with the addition of a major or two and a colonel.

"Pipe is an authority in military matters. He came out last in everything at the Polytechnique," said one.

"It was Pipe who recommended Gambetta to appoint D'Aurelle de Paladines. 'Ah, M. le Ministre,' says he, 'here's a general entirely after my own heart, with a head as wooden as my pipe.'"

"*Parbleu!* M. le Ministre himself is the general after Pipe's own heart. 'Citizen Gambetta,' says Pipe to him, 'your true place is with the army. You have the military genius of a Napoleon.' 'Yes, yes, my friend,' says Gambetta; 'but of which Napoleon?'"

The *équivoque* was received with a shout of laughter. "*Du petit,*" cried one. "Of Napoleon the Little!"

"The Man of Sedan !"

"And of the *coup d'état*."

"The bastard of Madame Hortense."

"The Judas who betrayed the Republic with a kiss."

"A health, comrades," echoed a young lieutenant, lifting up his glass. "Satan's, —and may he soon take both Bismarck and Badinguet to himself."

"Eh, *mon ami*, how is that possible?" said another. "When one says either Bismarck or Badinguet, one says the devil."

"No, he who says Bismarck says the Devil; but he who says Badinguet only names the Devil's little pet-monkey. '*Toi, son singe, marche derrière,*'" a third cried, breaking out into the refrain of Hugo's savage verses.


For the next half-minute the room rang to a chorus of "*petit, petit!*" Then, with a general laugh the subject was dismissed; and the noisy group quieted down, and fell to discussing with comparative calmness the possibility of Gambetta's possessing military talent.

"If he were a general himself," objected one dissentient, "would he have appointed La Motte Rouge and D'Aurelle de Paladines to be generals? Till the time of M. le Ministre, old women were never entrusted with the command of armies."

"That is why you were so slow of promotion, my poor Jules," said Pipe en Bois. "Fifteen years in the army; and only for the last five weeks a captain! But the time has come when merit of every kind is recognized; and yours may give you soon the command of the army of the Loire. *La République* has need both of her sons and of her daughters."

The equivocal compliment produced a passing laugh at the expense of its recipient. "*Parbleu!* and of her ghosts, too, it would seem," said one young officer, pointing to the entrance of the *café*. "Here is one in uniform, at least."

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated; those of Pipe en Bois among the rest. "*Mon Dieu!*" he cried, jumping up; "*une apparition, vraiment* " He



ran forward, and stopped the new-comer as he was about to seat himself at a table partly unoccupied. "Tu n'es pas Louis Roland? Tu es son cadavre, n'est-ce pas?"


"What, my old friend Paul?" said Roland, recognizing him. "We are both of us in the land of the living, then, Cavalier."

"Eh, *mon ami*, of the living, sayest thou? Thou art sure that thou art living?" asked Cavalier, doubtfully.

"As sure as that Pipe en Bois is not put out yet; and that it rejoices me to see it. What, I look like a corpse, Paul, do I? A little blood that the Prussian bullets have drained from me, that's all. I have plenty left to spill yet for the Republic."

"And you have been in Tours——?"

"These two days, trying to see Gambetta. It seems, however, that he is so occupied in listening to generals who come to explain to him why they have been defeated, that he is compelled to refuse me an interview."



"But, my friend, what have you to say to him?" asked Paul.

The other only answered by a shrug of the shoulders, and a look.

"*Messieurs*," said Cavalier, comprehending this pantomime, "have the kindness to excuse me. This is an old comrade of mine at the Polytechnique that I have not seen for months; and we have much to talk about." He took Roland's arm; and led him from the *café*. "And your business with the Minister?" he asked, when they were fairly in the street.

"A plan for the reorganization of the army that I wanted to propose to him. *Voilà tout!*"

"Eh, *mon ami*, the reorganization of the army. We have had plans thrust on us since these last defeats by almost every officer in Tours," said Cavalier.

"We have had plans thrust on us! And of whom do you speak when you say 'we'?"

"Of M. le Ministre and his secretaries, Cendre, myself, and the rest. The whole

army attack us ; the Ministry is in a state of siege ; and for every shell the Germans throw into Paris, a dozen plans immediately come flying in among us."

Roland's look was one of surprise for a moment ; but then he smiled as if gratified. "Gambetta's secretary ! In that case, he has one good fellow and good Republican of a secretary, at least," he said. "But, Paul, you must manage me an interview."

"Eh, *mon cher* ! but first I must have something to say to M. le Ministre in excuse for asking it. Tell me a little of your plans. You know that they are safe with me," said Cavalier.

"Safe!—yes. Secrets much more troublesome to carry have been safe enough with both of us before now. But can you get Gambetta to see me to-night, do you think ?" asked Roland.


"Your plan, my friend—your plan," said Paul. They were close to a miserable *cabaret*, ill-patronized, and of an uninviting appearance. Cavalier prevented his com-

panion from passing, and drew him in. "The worse the walls, the less likely they are to have ears," he remarked. "We shall talk here much more at our ease than in the street, or at the Ministry."

An hour or so afterwards Roland was awaiting in the minister's ante-room the return of his secretary, who was within, endeavouring to persuade Gambetta to grant the young officer an interview that night. Pipe en Bois reappeared presently, shrugging his shoulders with a grimace of disappointment. "He will see you to-morrow, he says; but in Tours to-morrow means never. A little patience, though, *mon ami*. Cendre will be here presently; and he and I will go in together, and attack him."

Roland sat for some moments thoughtful, and without replying.


"Give me a sheet of paper and a pen," he said, at last. He took the stump of a quill Cavalier offered him, and sat down at one of the large tables the room contained. "Let him have this," he said presently,



handing a letter to his friend. "If he will read it, that is all I ask."

This time Cavalier was back in a few minutes. "Oh, oh," he said, shrugging his shoulders as he re-entered, "you have a style of putting matters forcibly, it seems. You are to go in to him at once, he says." He laid his hand on Roland's arm, after pointing to the door that gave admittance to the minister's cabinet. "Whatever you may say to him, or he to you," he continued, in an emphatic whisper, "trust always to Danton's '*L'audace, et encore l'audace, et toujours l'audace.*'" Roland assented by a sign, and entered.

At the sound of the closing door, a man seated before a table heaped with papers rose, and turned towards it. For several seconds the minister and his visitor stood looking at each other scrutinizingly, and in silence. Gambetta saw before him a young man of six and twenty, above the middle height, and robustly formed; with short brown hair and beard, deep-set eyes looking out from under bushy eyebrows, a



perfectly bloodless complexion, and an expression of face at once penetrating and impassive. Roland found himself in presence of a man some years older than himself; ardent, impetuous, and southern; with a lion-face, the haughtiest of eyes, and much such a mane of tumbled hair as one sees in the portraits of Mirabeau. Had a physiognomist made a third in the interview, and looked scrutinizingly at those two countenances—strikingly dissimilar, but each in its way remarkable—he would unhesitatingly have assigned to the two men a kinship in their faults. In the face of each there was a trace of arrogant self-confidence, disadvantageously set off by a lurking something of indecision. Perhaps with the minister the over-confident expression predominated, and the hesitating looked out more conspicuously from the eyes of the captain of engineers.

Gambetta naturally was the first to speak. “You look ill, monsieur,” he said. “Be seated, I beg you. You have been wounded, have you *not*?”

“ At Metz, monsieur.”

“ Is the wound healed ? You do not look to me like a man who has recovered.”

“ Very nearly healed,” said Roland. “ At least, I am fit for active service.”

“ And wish to be appointed to it, do you not ? That agrees with what I hear of you from my secretary. On the declaration of war, finding that your demand for active service was not at once complied with, you desired to resign your commission and to fight as a private soldier. That was patriotic, Captain Roland ; but surely a little inconsiderate.”

“ Monsieur,” said the young officer, “ I have always had but a choice of ambitions—to be of service to my country, or to die for her.”

“ To be either Camillus or Decius ? Yes ; but seeking death at Wörth or Gravelotte would not have driven back the Prussians across the Rhine. That must be done with the head rather than with the hand,” said Gambetta.

“ And with the heart,” rejoined Roland, “ as much as either.”

"You say true," Gambetta replied, with animation. "What are your political sympathies?" he continued—"Imperialist?"

"You forget, then, monsieur, that I have seen the generals of the Empire. No, I am like yourself—a Republican of the time of Cæsar."

A slight smile upon the minister's lips indicated that he did not dislike this allusion to his career under the Empire. "It would seem, however, that you do not think very highly of the generals of the Republic," he replied. He pointed to the topmost letter of a pile that lay before him. "You wrote this in my ante-room?"

Roland assented by a bow.

"Hastily, perhaps, monsieur? It contains passages that, on consideration, you would wish to recall?"

"No, not at all; it is the exact expression of my thoughts," said Roland.

"You think somewhat contemptuously and arrogantly, then, it seems to me—contemptuously of others, arrogantly of yourself. You are of the engineers, are you not?"

"The Empire made me a captain of engineers, it is true," said Roland ; "but at heart I have always been a man who desired to acquaint himself with every branch of military science."

"And who has done so? Is not that what you tell yourself, and why you write to me in such words as these?" Gambetta picked up the letter and began reading, "'Served by an incompetent staff and surrounded by ignorant specialists'——*Parbleu*," he said, breaking off and speaking in a slightly ironical tone, "I can understand that a man who at six or seven and twenty—is not that about your age?—has perfected himself in military science, must look down pityingly upon specialists."

Roland made no answer ; and the minister, after flashing a hasty and somewhat impatient glance at his unmoved face, read on rapidly, "'Served by an incompetent staff, and surrounded by ignorant specialists, you are hurrying to a fresh disaster ; and each failure gives the enemy a shred of our territory, destroys the last remnants of our

military strength ; and this, until you perish in defeat, and with you the hopes of our country, and of liberty.' Let me tell you, you would have done better to have left that out. I am not of a disposition to be seduced by compliments."

"I pay you none; I only speak the truth," said Roland.

Gambetta darted another keen look at the young officer, and resumed his reading. " ' In the name of our common faith in that country and in that liberty, grant me an immediate interview; give me the means of proving to you that I understand warfare, and of showing you the causes of your past defeats, and of the failures that you are preparing for yourself. Is not the incapacity of your administrators and generals sufficiently demonstrated to justify you in seeking, without regard to precedent or seniority, the means of continuing the war with less misfortune? "

"And now, Captain Roland," he said, laying down the paper, "will you tell me, if you please, what all this means? "

Roland rose from his chair and went a couple of steps nearer to the minister. "We agreed just now," he said, "that both head and heart are needed for the defence of our country. This letter," laying his hand upon it as he spoke, "means that you are the heart of France; but that her armies have not yet found a head."

"I the heart of France! And whom, then, do you say should be her head? Yourself?"

"Léon Gambetta, monsieur. I would say to him, 'You have become a statesman; become also a general.'"

Gambetta rose, and the two men stood looking fixedly at each other.

"If he looked at me anxiously and doubtfully—as, pardon me, *M. le Ministre*, he does at present—I would say also to him, 'You imagine, perhaps, that a general is made by half a lifetime of training, and that he who is not master of the theory of warfare is incapable of attempting its practice. Undeceive yourself, M. Gambetta. Energy, large-mindedness, and a fertility in

expedients—these are the gifts of God that are above all things required. You, who have created armies, are, of all of us, the man to head them.’ ”

“And you who say this to me,” said Gambetta, “what post is to be given you? You speak in your letter of disregarding seniority and precedent. Precedent? yes, I should disregard precedent if, a civilian, I took the command of armies; but disregard of seniority can only apply to you. What is it that you seek for yourself?”

“I would seek for myself the task of re-organising—I have a plan for——”

“For turning defeats into victories! Ah, yes, I am deluged with them,” Gambetta interrupted. “What is it that yours would suggest? To unite all our scattered armies into one? To scatter them over France in bodies of guerillas? To dismiss all officers whose commissions date from the Empire? No, that cannot be your plan, for you are one of them yourself. To put my entire trust in the leavings of Metz and Sedan? To abandon Paris to her fate? To stake

everything upon a supreme effort to raise the siege? If your plan is any of these, monsieur, it falls at least half-a-dozen cart loads of waste paper short of being original."

"And if it were all of these instead of one of them," answered Roland, "would you listen to me while I show to you that if I do not propose to advance on Paris, it is not because I am without hope of raising the siege; that in the *débris* of our old armies you have what is wanted to give backbone to these new ones that you are raising; and thirdly, and above all, that it is in your power to create an army adapted to the situation, one that shall take the place of the ill-led crowds that, as I speak, are straggling, one mob east, another west, a third south, and all trying to bend the situation to suit the preconceived ideas of leaders as incapable of learning lessons from ill-fortune as the Bourbons? And then, for strategy—— But I forget," he said, checking himself, "that M. le Ministre has not yet given me leave to speak."

The minister rose from his chair and

walked once or twice across the room. "Well, then, this plan?" he said, reseating himself. "State it plainly, but in few words, monsieur—in few words, if you please."

Habitually terse and clear in explanation, Roland found no difficulty in complying with the request. "And why," said Gambetta, interrupting him after listening for a few minutes in silence, "why not simply at once throw oneself into the mountains?"

"Because that would be to give us hunger as well as the Prussians to deal with. It is the hilly and wooded country that must be held. That is a map of France I see there?" The speaker drew it to him and went on with his plan of campaign, illustrating what he was saying by an occasional line traced with his finger on the surface. "The broken country I speak of," said Roland, "forms long strips that bind together the various provinces, and would permit our army to be mistress of the whole of France, in spite of the occupation. By marching more quickly than the enemy, by

having always scouts where hill and plain join, and by being careful not to accept any engagement in the plain unless one were near a wooded district, and much more numerous than the enemy—— ”

Gambetta could not refrain from shrugging his shoulders. “It would seem, then, that you think as meanly of French soldiers as of French generals,” he said. “Why much more numerous than the enemy?”

“I might reply to that,” said Roland, “that the mobs of La Motte Rouge and D’Aurelle de Paladines, and lately of Chanzy, have commonly been superior in mere numbers to the armies that have defeated them.”

“The mobs, monsieur!”

“Simply mobs,” said Roland. “I don’t say that the soldier, like his general, is born; I comprehend, on the contrary, that the soldier is made. For my part, a hundred veterans of ten years’ service would be much more to my taste than three hundred recruits of ten weeks. And there are many of Chanzy’s men—who

alone, of our generals, has shown talent—that have not even seen ten weeks' service."

"And the God of Battles, then, is not always, you think, on the side of the big battalions? It seems to me, however," said Gambetta, "that there was another tale told at Sedan."

"Ah, yes," replied Roland, "Sedan! At Sedan two armies encountered, and the smaller and worse generalled was crushed. But to come to the present, to speak of the crowds of half-drilled peasants that are encountering Prussian armies—bravely, indeed, but with a frightful want of success. Well, numbers are almost always on the side of the peasants.

"Go on," said Gambetta, throwing himself back in his chair, as if determined to listen without again interrupting. "I begin to understand, I think."

He sat for some time in silence when Roland had finished, tapping with his foot, twisting and re-twisting some papers that he had pulled towards him; and then suddenly looked up. "You speak of com-

bining the Mobile National Guards, the mobilised, and the troops of the line,—a good deal, if I understand your project, after the fashion of the half-brigades of 1794. Will you take command of the camp of St. Omer, and try the experiment ? ”

“The camp of St. Omer. That is removing me very far from the spot where the decisive cast is to be thrown,” the young officer objected.

“Well, then,” Gambetta was beginning slowly. “But when,” he said, interrupting himself, “should this war after the fashion of Fabius have been first made? At what period of the war should the hilly and wooded country have been occupied by a guerilla army recruited from the whole population of France up to forty years, and consisting of mobiles incorporated with the line ? ”

“After the first defeats of August,” the other answered. “It was plain, very early in the month, that the military strength of France had been dilapidated during the last years of the Empire, and that the

Prussians were too strong for us in the open field."

"It was a mistake, you hold, for Bazaine to shut himself up in Metz? Another for so many men to be left in Paris?"

"Both were errors of the most ruinous character."

"But that can yet be repaired. Well, and if one said to you, 'Draw out on the spot a plan for amalgamating the army of the Loire, so as to have but one description of infantry; and let me know in how short a time it can be applied?' "

"I should require first," said Roland, "a statement of the condition, and of the exact position of that army.

"The condition, monsieur? In want of everything. The exact position? Retreat-ing before the enemy. If these reports will not serve you," said Gambetta, "I know of no others that I can furnish."

"If I am to interfere with the existing organization of the Loire army," objected Roland, "I must at least know what it is that I interfere with."

The minister let a disdainful movement of the eyebrows escape him. "There is an army," he said, "and there is an enemy before it. I told Chanzy no more."

"But Chanzy," the young officer replied, "retained the organization, or want of organization of his predecessors; he did not——"

"So that," said Gambetta, without attending to the speech he was interrupting, "you cannot draw me out a plan?"

"At once, if I have particulars," said Roland; "but——"

"*If* and *but*,—still *if* and *but*! Where were those words, monsieur," Gambetta interrupted, rising, "when you were just now reproaching me with not being at once head and hand,—Minister of War and Commander-in-chief? You told me that I, a civilian, ought not to hesitate to assume the chief command, and fight battles of the tactics of which I know nothing; and yet, on the plea that you don't know everything of its condition and position, you, who are a soldier, do more than hesitate, you decline

to draw me out a plan for re-organizing the army of the Loire." He moved a step forward, and pointed to the door. "*If* I find that I have a command to offer you," he said, sarcastically, "you shall hear from me within twenty-four hours at farthest. In the mean time, I will think a little of what you have said to me concerning a guerilla war."

CHAPTER VI.

COLONEL ROLAND.


THE New Year of 1871, disastrously as it everywhere opened for the French, could hardly have loured even in starving Paris on a less hopeful face than that of a young lieutenant-colonel, newly appointed head officer of engineers in the camp of instruction established at Nevers. Looking into the near future, he saw, with hideous distinctness, France whirled into a gulf of ruin, as the hurrying boat whirls over the rapids and into the hell-depths of Niagara. His patriotism anguished at the vision; his ambition prompted him to the thought that, had it been permitted him to attempt the feat, he could, by the strength of his genius

only, have plucked back his country even from the verge of the abyss.

"Your health," Gambetta had said to him, "does not seem to me to be sufficiently re-established yet to permit of your being sent on active service. General Vergne requires an engineer officer in the camp at Nevers. Take this post, and with it the grade of auxiliary lieutenant-colonel; and when opportunity offers," the minister added, "I will employ you elsewhere. Your scheme of an extensive and organized *chouannerie* is at present impracticable, Colonel Roland; but if Paris should fall, it may have its value."

It was a polite laying on the shelf; and, as such, the disappointed strategist chafed at it. "It is very unlikely," he said, "that occasion will arise for M. le Ministre to employ me elsewhere. This post that I have accepted from him is possibly one of the last that he will have power to give away."

"What do you say?" the minister asked, haughtily.



"I say," Roland replied, "that a certain siege in which we are both interested is almost at an end now, and that the entry of the Prussians into Paris will give the signal for your fall from power."

"Paris, monsieur, will hold out for many weeks yet."

"Paris, M. le Ministre, will surrender before the end of January."

"Go, sir—go," said Gambetta, dismissing him with an impatient wave of the hand; "you are more at home in criticising the past than in interpreting the future."

At Nevers, hatred of the Prussians, and contempt for the men of September 4th, filled Louis Roland's mind, and preyed upon it. "What shall I say of him?" he could even ask himself now of the man from whom he had hoped so much—Gambetta. "Is it possible for me to speak ill of the energetic tribune who was the first to proclaim the downfall of the Empire; and who, during these months of a desperate crisis, has been the life and soul of our imbecile government? And how can I, on

the other hand, speak well of the undecided and ignorant minister who was unacquainted with the condition and position of his armies; and whose barren and ill-directed activity could neither avoid disaster, nor find remedies for its effects?"

"I sympathize," continues the entry in his journal, "with his vigour, his rapid conception of facts, his devotion to the Revolution; but I detest his half-measures, his constantly recurring acts of weakness, and the concessions that he has made to the men and to the things of the Empire."

Of Favre, Trochu, and Simon he had nothing to say; his contempt for either was beyond finding measure in words.

He was sitting one evening, thinking with a sort of despair of the victories that the Prussians had won since July, 1870, when his orderly-sergeant entered and reported that a foreigner, suspected to be a Prussian spy, had been seized just outside the camp.

"A spy!" said Roland, starting up.

"We will soon dispose of him. Where is the general?"


"The prisoner asks for you by name, *mon officier*," said the sergeant, "and declares that he is an Englishman."

A quick hope flashed into Roland's mind, and he ran out. "You, Harry?" he cried, as soon as he saw the pseudo-spy. "Where have you hidden yourself these months past?"

"In a very motley sort of uniform, to tell the truth," said Clifford, as the two shook hands; "that of a *franc-tireur*. I have been fighting among a precious set of ruffianly heroes, certainly; fellows who made war pretty much in the fashion of North American Indians."

"On my word, you poets get into curious company! And when—and how—did you learn that I was at Nevers?"

"A few days ago only. Some of the officials that the Prussians had set scampering from Tours informed me of the establishment of a camp at Nevers, with yourself as head engineer officer; and so I came on



here at once to congratulate you on your escape from Metz, and your promotion. But, my dear Louis, how ill you look ! ”

“ Congratulate me,” said Roland, inattentive to the last remark. “ Condole with me, you mean. This epaulet is the proof that the Tours government despise me as a dreamer, and so have laid me on the shelf while they finish ruining France. Congratulate me ! I believed that Gambetta, at least, would comprehend my plans ; but either the men that are about him have inoculated him with their own stupidity, or his genius is that of an orator, and nothing but an orator. Demosthenes before him was more successful in the assembly than in the field.”

By this time Roland had got his cousin to his quarters, and dismissed the sergeant. He went on now to relate the particulars of his conference with Gambetta at Tours. “ Well ? ” he said, when he had finished.

“ The Tribune was jealous of you,” said Clifford. “ He could not but see military genius of a high order in your plans ;

and it seemed to him that by adopting them, and putting you in a condition to execute them, he would be deposing himself from the position of first man in France. Gambetta wishes no man to hold that place but himself."

Until the moment of this speech Roland had not, perhaps, fully realised the influence that his ardent and active mind had acquired over the equally ardent, but more dreamy and contemplative one of his cousin. "You have wonderful faith in me, Harry," he said, smiling. Distorted as might be Clifford's imaginative portrait of the Tribune of Tours, it was impossible that it should altogether displease him.

"I had need have faith in something," said the other; "for I have lost all hope of the Republic—A Republic! No, a government of which it is impossible to say whether it is more coward or fool."

"Call it *bourgeois*, my dear fellow; and you have said everything. 'Whatever you please, excepting danger,'—that is the motto of the good people who are in power

in Paris just now. If it were not for their dread of an insurrection of the National Guard, they would already have opened the gates to Bismarck."

Clifford let his head sink dejectedly down upon his arms, as if admitting the truth of the remark. "I am tired of it all," he said. "Oh, how low France has fallen! There are only two disgraces left for her,—the surrender of Paris, and a degrading peace."

"And what if the one were to prevent the other?" asked Roland, after a moment's pause, and speaking with energy. "What if the struggle à *outrance* were really to begin when Paris capitulates? I mean," he said, in a lower voice, "what if the red flag were raised to fight under?"

The other lifted his head, and looked him in the face. "The red flag?" he said, doubtfully. "Well, Dantons fight better than Trochus, certainly; and the democracy are less cowardly than the *bourgeoisie*. And then, the horrors of 1793 would be impossible in 1871."

“Yes; Tinville’s *fournées* can’t well be provided in the age of the electric telegraph—You would not think ill of me, then, if I were to become a leader in such an attempt?”

“Think ill! I would serve under you.”

“What, among workmen in blouses! In the old days, Harry, you were something of an aristocrat in your republicanism.” A shadow came suddenly into the speaker’s face; and he laid his hand on his friend’s shoulder. “You will tell me, perhaps,” he said, “that the old days are dead.”

“Perhaps!” Clifford uttered the word as if it had been a groan. His head sank forward; and he remained for several moments with his face hidden in his hands. “Yes,” he said, not looking up, and speaking in a voice that was scarcely articulate; “yes, the old days are dead. Their ghosts haunt me, though. I thought as you spoke that Daisy’s face rose up before me, and that I looked into her eyes and found them innocent.” He broke out into a strange, mirthless laugh. “Oh, yes!” he said, “*the old days are dead.*”

"I never had a sister," said the other, leaning over, and taking his hand; "but I can partly understand what you feel."

"Feel!—I feel hell burning in me. Such an exquisite face, Roland; so lovely and childlike, and smiling. Suppose I were to meet it in the street some night—haggard, and with paint upon the cheeks! I hope a bullet will spare me that, at least." A sort of smile contorted his lips; but it was even more wretched than his laugh had been. "Perhaps the devil will not have me hand my soul over to him, though," he said, "until I have sent him Ralston before me. I may come across him yet, and put a bullet into what he calls his heart. I have seen them flying often enough, of late; but none would ever take me for a billet."

The laugh into which he again broke was so wild that Roland looked at him with almost a doubt of his sanity. "What, in God's name, have you been doing with yourself since you came to France?" he said.

"In God's name! In the devil's name, you mean? I fell in with some good

fellows of his, rare hands at—— He faltered in what he was saying, and reeled in his seat for a moment as if about to fall from it. “Have you anything eatable, Louis, in this den of yours?” he said, recovering himself. “I have tasted nothing for two days,—I had not a *sou* left to buy bread with.”

“And you could let me sit here prate—prating to you; and never so much as interrupted me with, ‘I am starving!’” Roland hurried off; and returned in a minute or two with such eatables as the Nevers Camp afforded. “Here,” he said, filling out a large glass of wine; “this first—Drink; and get a little life back into that face of yours.”

“Wine,” said his guest, when the supply of food set before him had all but disappeared—“more wine.” He drank off glass after glass with avidity; and then, filling out a fifth or sixth, held it up between him and the light. “To a *franc-tireur* now, such a colour as that is wonderfully suggestive of blood,” he said.

“What made you a *franc-tireur*?” inquired his cousin.

“What made Cæsar a hero, and Catiline a cut-throat? Circumstances, my dear fellow; nothing in the world but circumstances. I had got into the neighbourhood of Metz, and was anxious to get into the town itself, to look for a certain officer of Engineers that I had heard was shut up there with Bazaine. You must let me have the history of your escape presently. Well, I fell in, one October morning, with a set of freebooters, or freeshooter is the better English for *franc-tireur*, I suppose. ‘Join us,’ said the captain; so I joined them.”

“You might have made a better choice. Still, a *franc-tireur* is a guerilla, and guerilla-fighting is our main hope now.”

“Why, I had no great choice allowed me. If I had not agreed to shoot in company with my new friends, I should have been shot by them. They had only my word that I was an Englishman, and mightily suspected me at first of being a German and

a spy. It was with a revolver—that of my future captain—pressed to my ear, that I agreed to throw in my lot with theirs. A pleasant sensation, Louis, that of a pistol muzzle at your ear.”

“I have never tried it. You joined the ruffians, then?”

“Heroes, my dear fellow, heroes! There were patriots among them as free from scruples as the man of Sedan, and with no more humanity than his uncle. Yes, I joined them, and when, six weeks afterwards, our lieutenant was shot in a skirmish, I brought off the wounded man—he was the only one of the gang who was any better than a mere cut-throat—when the other fellows who were with us ran for it. He died, and they voted me into his place. I wonder what my ancestor who was killed at St. Albans, that ‘proud northern lord’ whom the king-maker challenged to a *rencontre*, would have said, if his ghost could have seen me bullying my mob of patriots. Falstaff hadn’t a raggeder regiment.” The speaker laughed, and pointed to the rags

that scarcely hung upon him. "What do you think of the uniform, Louis?"

"I'll replace it," Roland said, going to a box, and pulling out some articles of his scanty wardrobe. "Well," he asked, as his cousin was dressing himself, "what parted you and your patriots?"

"I killed my captain." The young man pushed aside some stray tangles of long hair, and showed that the tip of his left ear had been shot away. "Not bad shooting on either side. My bullet struck him in the forehead."

"It was a duel, then?"

"Yes, he insulted me, and I struck him. Then he challenged me. You have heard of a village called Bazeilles?"

"Heard of it!" said the other, his cheek reddening and fire starting into his eyes. "My God, if I had but the Bavarian ruffians before me who did what was done there, and a French regiment under my orders that I could rely on. Heard of it, do you ask me?"

"They burned the village, did they not,

and whatever inhabitants were in it? Those who attempted to escape were shot down or driven back into the flames?"

"Men, women, and children were shot down. It was the worst, the most fiendish thing of the whole war."

"Well, we caught one of the fiends a fortnight ago, or at least a Bavarian who belonged to the regiment that burned the village. I will leave you to guess what was the sentence pronounced upon him. Our captain, by the way, was from the neighbourhood of Bazeilles."

"A rope and the nearest tree, of course."

"Not at all, a tree and a heap of faggots round it. 'You burned my countrymen alive—men, women, and children,'—said our captain to him; 'well, we will burn you.' He shrieked as they tied him to the tree. I can hear that shriek yet."

"Horrible! And was he burnt, then?"

"I begged so vehemently that they would be content simply to hang him, that Vallé—our captain, I mean—told me at last, 'If it were not for the way in which you have

fought since you have been with us you should hang instead of him.' He himself stepped out with a lighted piece of wood to fire the pile, and at the instant the flame caught it I took out my revolver and shot the Bavarian through the head. Vallé turned on me like a madman and dashed his torch into my face. '*Prends ça, f—!*' he yelled to me. I knocked him down in return, and the result was that next morning we took each a chassepot and settled the affair at a distance of two hundred yards. He fell dead at the first fire, and since then I have been absent from the band without leave." Clifford lifted his glass, and finding it empty, "More wine, Louis," he said, "and let us drink to what the next month or two may bring forth. Here's to you and to the Red Republic."

The other filled up his glass in acknowledgment of the toast. "Red or black," he said, "here is to whatever Republic will fight it out to the last."

CHAPTER VII.

“AUX ARMES, CITOYENS !”

PARIS had capitulated. From the height of the Vendôme Column the bronze figure of Napoleon looked down on that metropolis to which his armies had come from the farthest ends of Europe, bringing captured flags and cannon ; and saw the Prussian *pickel-haube* gleam in the wintry sunshine ; and heard along the Boulevards the tramp of marching regiments, grandsons of the men who fled at Jena, and in the Champs Elysées the music of the *Wacht am Rhein*. Since the morrow of Waterloo there had been no day so humiliating for France.


The morrow of Waterloo ! It was a *fête carillonnée* by comparison. At Waterloo

the Prometheus whom the English chained on the rock of St. Helena went down before the thunderbolts of half Europe, tremendous even in defeat; and rending his vanquishers sorely in his fall. The great battle gave back, indeed, to the nations whatever Napoleon had taken from them, crowns, provinces, the spoils of war, and the treasures of art; but it reft from France scarcely a league of territory that she might with any show of justice call hers. When Wellington was no longer hunting in the neighbourhood of Paris, and Blucher had ceased to gamble at her play-tables, French sentinels still looked from Strasburg across the Rhine to Kehl, and the morning *réveil* in Metz was beaten by French drums. France, the foot of allied Europe on her throat, and Europe's sword pointed at her, had perforce rendered back the fruits of twenty years of victory; but although she rose from the dust shorn of her gay panoply, and with her beauty sorely scarred, her conquerors had forborne to lop away a limb from her. Half a

century had yet to pass, and the lion's skin of that Napoleon who rushed so fiercely on the hunters at Ligny and Mont St. Jean was to be stripped from his nephew at Sedan, and only a wolf-fox revealed beneath it, before France might be not only vanquished but dismembered. The morrow of Waterloo! What was it compared to that day of the early spring of 1871 on which the Germans entered Paris? On that March morning the bronze effigy of the Desolator looked down from its high pedestal, and saw the grandsons of the men whose country he had mercilessly ravaged, and whose armies he had driven in defeat, bivouacked within sight of that Invalides Palace which contains his tomb, and waiting until France should arrange the payment of an indemnity of five milliards of francs, and should cede to an Emperor of Germany crowned at Versailles, Alsace, and the fairest portion of Lorraine. Never, since Agincourt gave to the English Harry the Fifth a third of the realm in present possession, and the promise of the

rest, had defeat branded so deep a shame upon the brow of France.

Was there strength yet to resist? Gambetta had said “Yes,” but Gambetta was discredited by the defeats of the generals he had appointed, and slighted as little better than a madman by Thiers, and the Assembly elected at Bordeaux. In Paris there had lurked a dread lest the National Guard, the temper of which was, with good reason, distrusted, should explode, on the entry of the Prussians, into a sputter of musketry, and a series of street-fights ensue that would convert the metropolis into something between a Saragossa and a Moscow. Days, and then weeks, went by, however, and beyond sullenly dragging certain cannon out of the zone marked as that of the Prussian occupation, the Guard had made no sign. Kaiser Wilhelm and his soldiers came and went, the Bordeaux Assembly had bought peace at the price that Bismarck set upon it, and still Paris seemed to sleep. Vesuvius, a volcano yet more eruptive than the French capital, is



often singularly quiet before an outbreak; so quiet that the curious go to the very edge of the crater, and, leaning over, peer with inquisitive eyes at the fire-devil brooding far below. On the morrow, perhaps, there are a few low mutterings and a slight shaking of the earth; and before the week is out affrighted groups are gathered at the gates of Naples, and within and without the mountain all is fire.

The siege being ended, and Thiers and Bismarck busy haggling over the terms upon which France was to buy out her conquerors, a desire to look on Paris in her hour of misfortune drew many visitors to that which a short twelvemonth before had been the gayest city on earth. Had Colonel Roland of the Engineers and his friend Henry Clifford been in the capital in the early days of March, they might have stumbled up against Mr. Hodgson Sprott in the Champs Elysées, or have found Lord Ralston smoking a cigar as he strolled about ruined St. Cloud; and a duel *à outrance* have suggested itself to Clifford

as the only termination possible to such a meeting as this last.

As fate would have it, however, Lord Ralston lounged lazily and undisturbed through Paris and its environs; and the man who hated him so deeply was still lingering in the Nevers camp, scorning France more and more from day to day. Keenly as he had felt the news of the capitulation of January 28th, Roland had lived at first, on its reaching him, in daily expectation of a popular outbreak, and had contrived to communicate his expectation to his cousin. It was not until February had become March that Clifford took out his journal, and, tearing from it the last pages he had added, threw them into the fire; and that Roland began very gloomily to ask of himself, “Have I, then, no country?”

March had dragged on at Nevers as in Paris; and it was now the nineteenth of the month, and afternoon. A scanty dinner was just over; and Clifford had turned again to some work in which his cousin was

employing him, when the other, after walking up and down hurriedly for a minute or two, came up to him, and, grasping him by the arm, said abruptly, "You were speaking the other evening of going to America. I will go with you."

Clifford started, and looked at him incredulously. "You would leave your country?" he said.


"I have no country. She has dishonoured herself."

"And your mother, Louis?"

"She will come with us."

"Your rank in the army?—the career you may look forward to?"

"The career that I look forward to! Does it seem to you so glorious to look forward? Oh, it was bad enough to be an officer of the French army when Sedan was being fought; but now——! I have always in my head what some of those capitulated cowards—regulars—not National Guards; regulars, I tell you, were heard shouting out, the hounds, the *canaille*! in the streets of Paris after the capitulation.



‘*Ma foi*,’ said the miserable wretches, ‘we ask no better than to go as prisoners into Germany, where they drink, we are told, such excellent beer.’ Let us get out of France, Harry. The air wretches like that breathe is poisoned.” He put on his *képi*, remembering some instructions that he had to give to a subaltern, and walked away. “No more courage, no more patriotism, no more honour,” he said to himself as he went out.

When he was close to the place where he looked to find the lieutenant of engineers of whom he was in search, an officer sent from General Vergne’s quarters came quickly up to him. “The general must see you at once, colonel,” he said. “There is strange news come from Paris, or, at least, from Versailles.”

That evening Roland sat for a short time writing in his quarters. Next morning, the engineers of the Nevers Camp were without their colonel, who, with Clifford accompanying him, had set out for Paris, having first

despatched the following letter to the Minister of War—

“Camp at Nevers, March 19th.

“MON GÉNÉRAL,

“I have the honour to inform you that I am about to proceed to Paris to place myself at the disposal of the movement which is being organized there. Having learned that two parties are struggling for mastery in the country, I do not hesitate in joining the side which has not concluded peace, and does not number in its ranks generals guilty of capitulation.

“I have the honour to be,
mon général, etc.,


“L. ROLAND.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.


ONCE in the lifetime of a man, perhaps, there comes to him a delicious realization of exceeding beauty—the vision of Paris revealed to eyes that as yet have known her not, as she lies smiling in the summer sun, with no cloud in the sky above her, and palace and column rising stately, and trees waving cool along her boulevards, and life at its maddest and merriest in her streets. Oh, strange leper-city, tainted with all that is foulest of sin and suffering! to enter thee for the first time at one-and-twenty, when the June sun is hot on thy bold forehead, is to behold outspread before our dazzled eyes all the delight of life and all its glory; and to be smitten with a sudden, eager longing

for deep draughts from the cup of mingled poison and pleasure that thou holdest forth, a smiling Circe, for all to drink from. "See Naples, and then die," says the old Italian proverb. "See Paris, and then flee from her," is the counsel that the man of riper years and dearly-purchased experience of life would fain proffer to the youth who until now has seen her not. But see her, if it be possible, on some fair June day, when the smile of the sunlight is on her, and her streets are as rivers of brightness through which the tide of life runs joyously; and then shut your eyes to the greatness of the harlot's beauty, and stop your ears and flee from the laughter of her voice, that calls day and night, "Enjoy, enjoy, enjoy." For he who listens to that temptation, and is seduced to become a partaker in her sins, finds presently that the promise she has made to him is a mocking one, and that here, if anywhere on earth, the curses of life are bitter to the children born to Adam; that pleasure turns always to pain, and the wine of life has an after-taste as of



gall ; and that those who have loved Paris best have died in general in the madhouse, the hospital, and the Seine. It is the city of loves and joys that are fierce and perishable, of all mirth that is born of vanity ; and the wares that are offered in her are the pleasures of the body, and the price that men pay for them is their peace of soul.

Clifford had seen Paris last in the early September days of 1870, when men's thoughts were not of the glory of the autumn weather, but of the terrible news of Sedan ; and their watch was for the armies of the Prussians, and the first question that two millions of people asked on rising, "Are they come?" The invader had sat down since then under the walls of the French capital, had besieged the two millions of people, and vanquished them ; and after marching in taunting triumph through the streets of their city, lay now once more encamped outside its walls, with half the forts that were the keys of Paris clutched in his grasp, and his coffers ready



for the gold of France to be poured into them in ransom. And in Paris, meanwhile, the two millions of Frenchmen whom he had so easily vanquished were tearing at each other's throats.

The red flag that was up in the streets of the city was already stained with blood, Roland and Clifford found, on entering. They were in Paris by noon on March 20th; and learned then for the first time of the murders of Generals Lecomte and Thomas. On Clifford, especially, the news produced a deep impression.

"It is murder, then," he said, bitterly, "that we are come here to take part in."

Roland eyed him sharply. "Draw back," he said, "draw back, if you wish—there is still time for *you*."

"You might have left that unsaid. You know that so long as you go forward I go, too," his friend replied.

"Well, then," said the other, "listen to me. I have taken my life in my hand, and from the moment you join the insurrection you do the same. We cannot stop in such

a path as we are entering upon because there are two, or even two hundred bodies lying in it. When was there ever a revolution that these things did not happen at the outset? I have never heard that William of Orange hesitated to head the Dutch against us when Louis XIV. invaded Holland, because the very men whom he was heading had just before torn in pieces the noble De Witt. A mob, and a Paris mob above all, acts as old legends say the devil does when he is raised. You must either be strong enough to master it, or it turns on you, and rends you in pieces. For my part, I hold that, with France at stake, it is worth while making the attempt to master it."

The speakers were leaving a restaurant where they had just breakfasted. Seeing that his companion's look was still gloomy, and expressive of a mind that refused to augur hopefully of the future, Roland added, quickly, "And, then, you heard what account those fellows we have this moment left were giving of the matter. Lecomte, they said,


was shot by his own men, and Clément Thomas by some National Guards whom he had enraged by his severities during the siege. After all, it would be unfair to charge these murders on the Revolution."

Clifford only shook his head. "You speak of the devil. I begin to think we shall see him loose in Paris yet," he answered.

"And if it were Satan in person," said the other, "that headed the outbreak, I would follow him, so that he engaged to lead me against the Prussians."

They walked on for a considerable distance without anything more being said. In the Rue de la Bourse, a carriage, and a group of twelve or fifteen persons gathered round it, drew their attention. The two friends went up; and found that these last were listening to a young man, fashionably dressed, who, leaning out of the vehicle, was proclaiming with violence that, although the party of order had suffered a defeat, all was not over yet, and that the victims of the day before yesterday should be avenged.


"They are two," a voice said close beside



Roland. "If the men of order, as you call them, had been the victors, they would be ten thousand."

The person to whom the words were addressed started as if a serpent had lifted its head and hissed at him, looked at the speaker for a moment, and then, without replying, signed to his coachman to drive on. The little assembly of listeners, the members of which were mostly of that well-dressed class native to the neighbourhood of the Bourse, melted away also; and left the two friends, and the man whose interruption had dispersed the gathering, standing almost alone. Roland looked at him curiously. He might be between sixty and seventy years old; and was plainly dressed, and small of size; but derived considerable dignity of aspect from a head of the type that painters might give to a prophet. There was severity in his face; but it was softened and almost contradicted by the mildness of the eyes.

"You are for the Revolution, citizen," said Roland to him. "Is it of the men



who have made peace that you speak when you say 'the men of order?' "

The other looked at him attentively. "You are of the army?" he said, after a pause, filled up by some moments of this scrutiny.

"Of the Engineers. I came to Paris only this morning."

"To seek for M. Thiers? You will find him at Versailles," the old man said, coldly.

"The Revolution will not leave him there? No, that would be too gross a folly," said Roland.

"Citizen," said the other, about to move away, "you are speaking to a man who has waited for twenty-five years, part of the time among the swamps and under the sun of Cayenne, for the coming of the day of the people; and who, now it is here, does not wish that it should begin in bloodshed."

"Twenty-five years!—Cayenne!" Roland repeated, looking hard at him. "Is it Delescluze that I am speaking to?"

The other only answered by slightly bowing his head, and moved away.


Roland hastily overtook him. "Citizen," he said, "it is my good fortune that brings about this meeting. You are acquainted, I know, with Paul Cavalier—the Cavalier, I mean, who was secretary to Gambetta. Do you trust him?"

"Pipe en Bois?" said the old revolutionist? "Yes, Pipe is one of us."

"And I, too," said Roland, "as this letter from Cavalier to me will show you."

Delescluze glanced through the letter; and his manner at once became more cordial. He invited the two young men to accompany him to the Hôtel de Ville, where the Central Committee, the provisional government of the insurrection, was then sitting; and as they walked on engaged with Roland in a discussion concerning the situation, rejecting as decisively as the other advocated the theory that the forces at the disposal of the insurrection ought at once to advance upon Versailles, and drive from there or capture the Thiers Government.

"If the Assembly," urged Roland, "are



given time to collect troops, they will apply to the Prussians for them, and Paris will find herself attacked by two hundred thousand prisoners of war sent home from Germany."


Delescluze listened tranquilly. "A march upon Versailles," he replied, "would make the brotherhood that we offer France look too much like a brotherhood of Cain." He pointed to a *drapeau rouge* suspended near them. "Our flag is red, but I would not have our hands dyed of the same colour; and above all when the blood that they would be dipped in is that of Frenchmen."

Of his two hearers, Clifford seemed to approve, and Roland to listen with impatience and astonishment. "They call you the last of the Jacobins," he said. "You are the Paul Delescluze, are you not, who swears by Danton, and who fought so staunchly in '48? Have you changed since then that you reply by speaking of brotherhood when one presses you to drive the Bordeaux Assembly from Versailles? Are they your brothers, then, who have made peace? who seek to buy their own miser-

able lives and fortunes from the invader at the price of the shame and ruin of France? Are they your brothers who say to you, 'Stoop your neck to the German yoke; it is heavy, but it is a lighter burden than that of continuing the war?' " He stamped with his foot upon the pavement. "Oh!" he said, "I would crush them to the last man—the last viper, rather—before they should live to bring this shame upon us. Are your colleagues of the Central Committee as tender-natured as yourself, Citizen Delescluze?"

"Like me, they are of the people," said Delescluze. "Like me, they will say, 'If Versailles attacks us, we can defend ourselves; and we will appeal in the name of the Paris that we defend to the people of France.'"

"You will appeal? Yes! and Thiers will appeal also; and he will say that which will poison the mind of France against you. Do you not see that he will charge you with having forced him to make peace, even while you are taking up arms to continue



the war? He will cry to the provinces, "See these troublers of the Republic, these socialists; it is they that deliver up the country to the foreigner, that condemn us to suffer the greatest humiliations, to make the most cruel concessions. They are the accomplices, the hired creatures, of Bismarck. They are Prussians." The young man laughed strangely. "Yes," he said, "you will call upon France to join you; and the answer that France will make you will be a bombardment of the capital." They were at the moment entering the Hôtel de Ville, the head-quarters of the insurrection. Roland laid his hand upon the arm of the old Jacobin, and stopped him. "In a fortnight, perhaps in a week," he said, "Versailles will have collected troops, and a second siege of Paris will be about to commence. We have to-day to conquer in; to-morrow it will be too late, and only possible to die."

Delescluze hesitated for a moment. "Oh! if it were not the blood of Frenchmen," he said. "If even these brigands of the As-

sembly could be the only victims! But the National Guard against the Line; poor peasants taken from their fields and brutalized into an army, shot down by Paris workmen, and shooting them down! No, citizen, history must not have it in its power to say of the Revolution, 'It pretended to have taken up arms against the Prussians, and was more eager than they to shed French blood.'"

Roland listened impatiently. "In the street just now," he answered, "you said to a man who spoke of the deaths of Lecomte and Thomas, 'If the men of order, as you call them, had been the victors, the victims would not be two, but ten thousand.' On the day when the party of order retake Paris, you will remember your words, and curse the hour when you and your colleagues had it in your power to crush them, and forbore to do so."

"On that day," said Delescluze, "I will die behind a barricade. But it is a folly to think that it will ever come."

The other did not answer; and, leaving



the two young men to wait his return, Delescluze withdrew to seek the members of the Central Committee, the governing body of the insurrection until the Commune was elected. Roland looked after him, and then at Clifford. "Who would think," he said, "that plots for the overturning of governments could ever have been hatched in a brain like that? Who would believe that this man, whom a crotchet of humanity hinders from marching on Versailles, would guillotine half of the Assembly there, if his principles called on him to do so?"

"And what," said Clifford, "are the principles of citizen Delescluze?"


"Certain words that were in the mouths of all Frenchmen in '93 sum them up, 'Le peuple Français debout contre les tyrans.' To Delescluze, Louis Philippe, Cavaignac, the Emperor, and Trochu, have all been tyrants, and Thiers is now their hated successor. He is not anxious, as some of the men that we shall find associated with him certainly are, to cut up France into a number of trades-unions, of which Paris

would be the largest. It is a Jacobin Republic, and not a Commune of Socialists that he has dreamed of. After all, it is a noble spirit; one might almost call him the Carnot of the Second Empire."

"I honour him," said Clifford; "he seems to me to understand that war—and civil war, above all—is a tiger one should be very reluctant to take the lead in letting loose."

Roland shrugged his shoulders as he listened to this speech. "I wish to heaven he could be got to understand," he replied, "that this is not a moment for appeals and proclamations, but for striking, and striking boldly. If he should contrive to persuade the Central Committee not to march on Versailles, why——" The *ci-devant* colonel's face grew very gloomy; and, leaving his sentence half-uttered, he fell into a reverie that lasted until Delescluze came to summon him to an interview with the committee.

In one of the largest rooms of the Hôtel de Ville were gathered from a dozen to



fifteen men, for the most part of the working class. Very few of these improvised rulers of the French metropolis boasted clean linen, and only two of them anything like care in dress. Of this brace of dandy revolutionists, the elder, the moment Roland presented himself, lifted towards him a pair of cat-like eyes, and indulged in a stealthy and attentive scrutiny of his appearance. The other, who, while lounging back in one chair, had flung his legs across another, kept his inflamed face turned towards the ceiling, and surveyed it with a sleepy and drunken stare.


Delescluze introduced these two to the young officer as Felix Pyat (a name Roland found not unknown to him) and Raoul Rigault. Pyat favoured the ex-engineer with a sardonic smile. "Ah, ah!" he said, "and this is the officer of engineers who would have the National Guard take a morning walk to Versailles. A pretty little plan, *ma foi*! And what of the Prussians, citizen? Either you know nothing of any war but that which is made with the pick

and the shovel, or you are trying to get us to walk blindfold into a trap."

Roland eyed the fox-visaged editor of the *Vengeur* sharply, and with considerable disdain. "Every man to his trade, citizen Pyat. I have heard that yours was journalism," he answered.

"It would be as well, at least," said a young member of the International Society of Workmen, René Avrial by name, "if the citizen Pyat would keep his sharp words for his journal, and say them of the Versaillais; and not of citizens who have done nothing to invite them."

Pyat tugged furiously at his grey moustache. "Nothing to invite them!" he echoed. "Fine talk this that citizen Delescluze has repeated to us, of marching on Versailles. Nothing to invite them! Here's a little Napoleon who tells us that if we will make over the command of the National Guard to him, he will treat that assembly of *scélérats* as the Corsican did the Convention, and make them jump out of window with bayonets at—— Fine talk, *ma foi!*"



“And what is there wrong with talk of that kind?” said Avrial. “We want to drive Thiers and the Assembly back to Bordeaux, it seems to me.”

“And the Prussians?” cried out Pyat. “Yes, I see them standing looking on, and saying nothing, while we are busy with the *sacrés Versaillais*. ‘And our milliards, who will pay them to us?’ Bismarck would say to William, as soon as the first battalion of the National Guard was seen marching out of Paris. While we were seeking for Thiers in the cellars of Versailles, we should hear all at once the bombardment re-commence.”

Pyat’s words made evidently a considerable impression on the assembly. Looking at the faces round him, Roland all at once comprehended of what sorry stuff the Central Committee was in the main composed. “Citizen,” he said suddenly to Pyat, “if you had not exhorted the people of Paris so often in your journal not to fear the Prussians, I should say from your talk now that you were afraid of them yourself.” He

turned to the others of the committee. 'And you, citizens, do you fear to be Frenchmen, then? What! dare you make it an excuse for not striking a decisive blow at those who have betrayed France, that you are too much afraid of the Germans whom they have sold her to?'

"I, at least," said Avrial, rising, "am for striking at both."

"And I—and I—and I," three others said, springing out.

The nine or ten who were left sat silent. Pyat broke into a malicious laugh, instantly echoed by Raoul Rigault with a drunken one.

"And the Prussians?" said Pyat.

A confusion of voices answered him from the hesitating majority of the Central Committee.

"They have half the forts in their hands," said one.

"The whole of the country round Paris," a second added.

"They occupy the third of France. If we provoke them what can we expect but

that, as the citizen Pyat warns us, they will instantly re-commence bombarding Paris."

"Bombard! they will occupy it," said a fourth. "What means have we of resisting them?"

Pyat saw his opportunity, and seized it. He pointed, with an air of mock deference, to the young colonel. "The citizen Roland," he said, gravely.

Several laughed, and even Avrial and the three others who were for an advance on Versailles smiled slightly. Rigault, who seemed momentarily becoming more intoxicated, got on his legs, and addressed himself to his colleagues with an air of drunken gravity. "It would seem, citizens," he said, "that you are looking for a general. Behold him, then, in the little Raoul, the man who will fetch these scoundrels of the Assembly back to Paris whenever you choose to send him for them, and dispose of them for you upon the Paris lamp-posts." He dropped into his seat again; and began singing noisily, and in

disdain of the attempts of three or four of the committee to quiet him—

“ Ah, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira !
Les aristocrates à la lanterne ! ”

Pyat stood looking round him for a few moments in malicious enjoyment of his triumph. “ *Allons !* ” he said at last, “ to the vote ! Who is for marching on Versailles ? Who is anxious that in a week or ten days Bismarck should be lighting his cigar at a fire made of the Tuileries, and lighted by Prussian shells, and that Father William should be praying in the Madeleine ? *Peste !* I had forgot, though, that the old fellow is a Protestant. In that case, he will perhaps save the Tuileries, and fit up the Man of Sedan’s bedroom as a chapel for himself.”

“ Citizen,” said Delescluze, sourly, “ it is only trifles that should be trifled with. Keep your wit for the readers of your newspaper ; it is your wisdom that we want at present.” He changed his tone to one of cordiality in addressing Roland. “ You

give us advice, citizen, that it would be very dangerous to the Revolution to follow, but you give it, I am certain, from the motives of a patriot," he said. "A march on Versailles——"

"Must this talk of marching keep all other business at a standstill till night?" cried Pyat. "We shall be no nearer Versailles at last, when we have wasted what is left of to-day in explaining to the citizen Roland and to each other our reasons for not going there. Vote, then, to the vote!"

"At least, let me explain myself first. You appear always to remember that you have views of your own to state, and to forget that you have colleagues. You insist upon all occasions on being heard first, and then refuse to let any other speak," said Delescluze.

Pyat sulkily sat down; and the other proceeded briefly to put forward his views of the situation.

"All the Revolutionary cities," he said, "will rise now that Paris has given the signal. It is only waiting a few days; and


Thiers and the Assembly will have fled from Versailles, and our victory will have been completed without bloodshed. What can they do but flee, when Lyons, Marseilles, and our other cities come to the help of the metropolis? And then, if we attacked Versailles, we should run a terrible risk of the loss of Paris. While we are masters of Paris, the Revolution lives in us; but once outside the walls and attacked by the Prussians, we can only die, and with us our cause perishes."

"It perishes with us," assented Pyat.

"You, as well as that cause, are far more likely to perish if you remain in Paris," said Roland. "You will live a week or two longer, that is all—until Thiers gets back the armies of Metz and Sedan from the Germans. You may even live a month or two, for Paris is not a city to be taken in a day; but he will crush you in the end."

"There would be little enough left of Paris by the time that he had crushed us," Pyat said, with a sinister laugh.

"Let him come! let him come!"



“Enter Paris! Paris barricaded as we shall barricade it!”

“He would never dare—he, nor the Germans with him,” several said, confidently.

“Ah, yes, he would dare, if it were in his power,” said Delescluze; “but the sun of that day of victory will never rise for him. In a week, every city of France will be with us. In a week, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Toulouse, will be marching to the relief of Paris, as Marseilles sent her citizens in ’92; and Thiers and his treaty will be—where? In the German camp, perhaps. Let him go; and then, when all France is in arms, as we are in arms—when all France is behind us, heroic, revolutionary, resolute to fight while a man or a cartridge is left her—then let Bismarck come, if he dares. Let us issue an appeal to the provinces, citizens, and let Paris tranquilly await the response.”

“One word,” said Roland, as Delescluze sat down, “and if you despise it now think of it in a fortnight hence. You will find

that the towns you rely upon will ask something more than an example from you—that it is only the sight of Paris victorious that would encourage them to rise in revolt. You will find—and not in months but in weeks—that a Revolution which does not take *Forward* as its watchword is doomed. It is life or death that you have the choice of, and that your vote will give you. Say whether you dare strike through Versailles at Prussia, or whether history is to write of you, ‘They had the folly to look on and do nothing, as a sheep might look on at the butcher whetting the knife that is to cut its throat, while Versailles collected forces to attack them.’ ”

The voting was an affair of a moment. Five declared for the advance on Versailles, and more than twice the number for remaining in Paris.

“Ah, bah!” said Felix Pyat, “was it worth while trifling so long about it, then? Let us get to the affair of the elections.”

Roland turned from the committee without any attempt to controvert the decision

that had been arrived at. He saw that the convulsion that had shaken Paris had, as it were, thrown the human mud of the city to the surface.

"You begin nobly, citizens," he said. "Continue for a fortnight as you have begun, and we shall not be far from the end."


He went into the room where his cousin waited for him, took his arm, and led him from the Hôtel de Ville without speaking.

"Well?" asked Clifford, when they were fairly in the street again.

"You saw my letter to the Minister of War. The commentary on that letter is that the Central Committee have just declared by a vote of twelve against five that they are too much afraid of the Prussians to risk an advance upon Versailles," the deserter answered.

A few days later the Paris Commune was elected. Finding that the flames of insurrection gave as yet no signs of spreading through France, and that, thanks to the action of the Prussians in liberating their prisoners nearly as rapidly as they had taken

them, the Versailles Government were fast bringing together a powerful army, the Communist leaders awoke, a week too late, to a sense of the tremendous error that had been committed. On the 3rd of April, nearly 100,000 of the National Guard poured out of Paris, under the command of three young civilians profoundly ignorant of the art of war, Flourens, Duval, and Bergeret. Flourens fell, deserted by his men, and shot down by a body of gendarmes who had surrounded him; Duval was taken prisoner, and immediately slaughtered; and Bergeret, with the relics of the beaten mob that had a few hours before believed itself to be an army, fled back confusedly into Paris. The next day, Vincent, a soldier of fortune who had distinguished himself in more than one quarter of the globe, was selected by the Commune to direct the military operations; and Roland, who had maintained relations with Delescluze, received, through the influence of the old Jacobin, a nomination as his chief of the staff. The ex-colonel of engineers



hesitated for half a day; but finished by accepting the post.

“From chief of the staff,” he said to his cousin and secretary, “to the dictatorship there is more than one step, certainly, but every ladder can be climbed. It remains to be seen if I shall have time to climb this one. If the Versailles press on the siege no quicker something may be done.”

CHAPTER IX.

LIBERTY.

It is not always the least valorous of mankind who are the most prudent. Mr. Hodgson Sprott had perhaps as little of the hero in his composition as any man that ever handled a goose-quill; but when the tocsin of the Versailles cannon cleared Paris of most of the foreigners who had flocked into the French metropolis since the capitulation, this little journalist was one of the select few that remained. He was at his post—one of profit, if of no particular honour; and his pen had never been busier, nor the pecuniary value attached to his contributions by the journals with which he was in correspondence more gratifying. While his reasons for staying where he was


took such satisfactory shape in cheques, it was easy to persuade himself that a non-combatant and a Briton ran no very great risk by remaining in Paris.

"I tell you, they never touch an Englishman, Angie," he asserted to his wife. "I'd be safe here even if I had not a pass from the Commune to show the Reds; and my passport, and plenty of other papers, for the Versaillais. When the shells are not flying, old lady, it's as safe to walk under the Arc de Triomphe as if it were Temple Bar."

Venturing, however, to accompany, without leave obtained, Colonel Roland and some subordinate officers of Vincent's staff in a visit that was paid to Fort Issy during the second week of April, Mr. Sprott was peremptorily arrested by order of the *chef d'état-major*, who had a military man's dislike of newspaper correspondents; and slept that night in the prison of Mazas. For several days after this (a message from him having been permitted to reach his wife next morning) the Ministry of War was haunted by a stout English lady of uncertain

years and resolute spirit, who persistently and indignantly demanded of Vincent, Roland, and all whom she came across, the instant release of her husband. The chief of the staff, whose worn face was daily growing darker and harsher, and his speech more taciturn, replied curtly that in his present situation the Paris correspondent of Mr. Munden's journal was at least out of mischief, and would have leisure to repent of the foolish curiosity that had led him to thrust himself into the midst of a conflict that in no way concerned him.

Within a fortnight of their respective appointments, the delegate of war and his chief of the staff were at odds on the question of the defence ;—Vincent maintaining that to hold Paris against the attack of the Versailles forces was the most that could be attempted ; Roland pressing him to attempt disciplining the National Guard into a state of efficiency that might enable battle to be given outside Paris, when the attack of the insurgents would be materially aided, or their retreat covered, by the fire of the




forts. A defensive system of tactics, declared the young engineer, was a ruinous one ; and the forlorn hope of the Commune lay, he asserted, in a victory that would encourage the whole of the French proletariat to take arms in support of their revolted brethren of Paris. The dispute, as was natural, resulted in distrust. Vincent suspected that his *chef d'état-major* was plotting to displace him ; and Roland resented the evident disposition of the delegate to treat him as something between a cipher and a spy.

Had her old acquaintance, Henry Clifford, continued to be one of the four or five secretaries who were all the staff of the Ministry of War at this period, Mrs. Sprott could not have failed to encounter him ; and would without doubt have found him willing to plead with her to the chief of the staff for her husband's release. Unfortunately for the *détenu* of Mazas, a day or two before the attempt of that unlucky journalist to get into Issy, Clifford had been sent to the hotly-bombarded fort in the quality of

captain of National Guards; and with a commission from Vincent and Roland to stimulate with his utmost energy the fainting spirits of the officer in command, who, although grievously suspected of want of courage, declined to resign; and whom, as a man of great influence among the Paris workmen, Vincent hesitated to cashier. It thus came to pass that while, with the help of such sauce as seasoned the black broth of the Spartans, Sprott ate his morning loaf in his cell at Mazas, Clifford, in ignorance of his imprisonment and even of his being in Paris, consumed a breakfast in no way more inviting in one of the casemates of Issy; and discussed with the commandant of the half-ruined fort the damage done by the Versailles artillerymen.

One morning (a morning lovely as were many days of that woful spring of 1871, when sun and sky smiled brightly down on Paris and saw such ruin wrought there), the wife of the imprisoned journalist was waiting for the sixth or seventh time in an ante-room of the Ministry of War, when a lad who



might, to all appearance, be about seventeen years old, came in, accompanied by Léon Séguier, the secretary who had replaced Clifford, and seated himself at some distance from her. Séguier looked curiously at this new-comer as he retired; and the lady with whom he had been left indulged herself with a stare so impertinent and prolonged that, after glancing at her very haughtily for a moment, the lad fairly rose, and turned his back. "The hussy!" muttered the stout Englishwoman to herself. She seemed by her manner to be meditating a not very amicable address to the seeming boy, when the return of Séguier, and his message that Roland refused to see her, diverted, at the same time that it increased her wrath.


"I'll make him," cried the lady, angrily. "Does the wretch think he's to keep my husband in prison till he's starved, or a shell comes in and kills him!"

She darted through the door before the secretary could interfere; and rushed away towards the bureau, in which the chief of the staff was ordinarily to be found. A

scream was heard next moment, as a couple of National Guards seized her; and presently she was dragged back, and hurried out into the street.

A third man, who had given the order for this removal, and possibly lent a hand in it, came presently, laughing noisily, into the ante-room where the late companion of the ejected Englishwoman was still seated. He was in civilian dress; and wore a light paletot and a soft felt hat, and carried a walking-cane. His face was that of a man of forty, good-looking, but coarsely so; and his eyes had a determined freedom of regard that some women might accept as a homage to their charms, but more were likely to shrink from. He fixed them now on the stranger before him in a stare that, as he noted the face, and still more the figure, of the pretended boy, grew suddenly as meaning as insolent.

"*Parbleu!* my beauty," he said, "you belong to the Amazon battalion of the National Guard, it seems. A kiss, my pretty one!"



The girl repulsed him with such strength that, but for catching at a table, the gallant citizen, who seemed to be slightly in liquor, would have fallen.


"*Nom de*——!" he cried, laughing still more loudly; "but the wench has the arm of a man! Vautrin—Séguier—where the devil are those fellows?"

Séguier, hearing the summons, came hastily to him.

"What's this jade doing here?" demanded Vincent.

"She—he, general," stammered Séguier, "asks to see Colonel Roland."

The general's laugh increased, if possible, in significance. "She—he," he said, mimicking Séguier, "asks to see Colonel Roland, does she? Well, then, my beauty, I'll steal a kiss from you first in payment of my trouble; and then bring him to you. What! not pay me, eh? *Peste!* but some of the women have bad taste! What is the jade afraid of that she keeps at such a distance from me? My credit's not so bad with the sex yet that I need try to steal a



march on this dear Roland. *Peste!* but this is a pleasant visit for one's chief of the staff to have paid him of a morning."


He walked off, humming the army ditty of "*Quand j'étais mousquetair-e*" to himself; and singing it more and more loudly as he got out of her hearing, swaggered along a corridor, and into the bureau where his chief of the staff sat poring moodily over a number of reports from commandants of forts, and generals engaged in the operations taking place around Neuilly.

"What, colonel!" said the Minister of War, "keep a pretty *citoyenne* waiting! Oh, the deuce!"

"A pretty *citoyenne*?" said Roland, absently. "You don't mean the wife of the Englishman that we have shut up in Mazas?"

Vincent's laugh grew boisterous. "Come and see, citizen! Come and see! *Parbleu!* the Amazon battalion and you seem on pretty good terms, if I may judge by the visits you have paid you."

"On my word, general, I don't under-



stand you. Who is it that is waiting for me?" asked Roland.

"Come and see, colonel," retorted the general, "come and see." He seized the other's arm, and dragging him into the room where Séguier and the disguised girl were waiting,—"*Voilà, mon ami!*" he broke out, halting with him full before the latter. "There is what is waiting for you; and no such bad-looking thing to find waiting for one, either. Has the *drôle* nothing to say to mademoiselle, after the trouble she has taken to contrive an interview? *Parbleu!* if I had been in his place——!" He looked with insolent admiration at the girl, as she spoke. "A kiss, then, *m'amie*," he said, swaggering up to her, "a kiss now that I have brought your colonel to you."


Roland put himself between them, with his hand to his sword. "Take care, general," he said; "kisses may be dearly bought."

Vincent seemed for a moment inclined to resent the interference; and then

laughed, and fell back a step. "Ah, bah!" he said, "take her in with you, then, and talk to her. She looks handsome enough in that boy's dress for one to offer her the command of the Amazon battalion we hear such a talk of. Would you accept it, *citoyenne*?" He drew aside to let them pass. "*Diable!*" he said, trying to make her look at him, "is she in a passion with me? Take away your tigress, comrade, take her away, I tell you, or she may be tempted by the devil that's in her to tear my eyes out."

"What does this mean, Isabel?" Roland said, when the girl and he were alone in the bureau that he occupied as chief of the staff. He indicated with an impatient wave of his hand the dress she wore. "What a figure for a modest girl to make?" he went on, bitterly. "Why in the world have you come to Paris?"

"Why in the world am I come to Paris, and what an unwomanly figure I make! *Merci* for the tone you take to me. I suppose, cousin, the society you have been



keeping for the last few weeks has improved you."

"You have changed, too, Isabel, since I saw you last. You had not put on a man's dress or a man's manner then. Why have you left my mother? Did she send you to me?"

"Yes, Louis, your mother sent me to you."

"Is she worse? Why did you leave her, if she is worse?"


"Is it for her son to ask me, 'Why have you left her?'"

The young man drooped his head. "No, Bella, perhaps not," he said, remorsefully. "She knew, though, that I only went from her because I was a soldier, and the Prussians were in France."

"She thought so until a few weeks ago. When your letter came from Nevers, she said, 'My poor boy, what a cruel thing to keep you shut up in that camp when you long so to be with the army.' Very soon afterwards we heard that Paris had surrendered."

“And you hardly knew whether you were glad or sorry at such news? You said to one another, I suppose, ‘There must be peace now—a cruel peace for France—but still it is peace.’ Did you ever read, Bella, of seamen who when the enemy boarded their ships have blown them as high as gunpowder would send them rather than surrender? Well, that is the sort of peace I hope to see made yet with the Prussians. Read this letter, and you will understand why I came to Paris.” He handed her a copy of that he had written from Nevers to the Minister of War.

“And you think, then,” the girl said, mournfully, as she returned it to him, “that you can encourage France to continue the war by cutting the throats of the men who have made peace? I don’t understand such patriotism, Louis. I wish, though, that my aunt could have seen this. Why did you not write and tell her that you had left the army as you left her,—because you thought your place was elsewhere?”



“She knows, then, that I have joined the insurrection?”

“She has been told, as cruelly as a newspaper could tell her, that you have deserted from the army, and if taken would at once be shot. Antoine Géry, you may remember, used to bring us from time to time a *Courrier du Midi*. He brought one about ten days ago; and my poor aunt read in it—but see for yourself what she read.”

Roland took the scrap of printed paper that she offered to him, looked at it in silence for a few moments, and then returned it. “Will you read it to me?” he said. “I want to understand how such accusations sound when I hear lips actually repeating them.”


As if by a sudden impulse, she went up to him, and laid her hand upon his arm. “And it is all of it false, then,” she said. “Pardon, me, Louis; I feared for a moment that it might be true that you had grown dissatisfied with an army in which your position was so unequal to your ambition. You know your mother—and your cousin

also, I hope—too well to fear that you need deny to either of us the story of the three hundred thousand francs.”

Roland lifted her hand and kissed it. “Thank you,” he said, “but read it.”

With the unwilling gesture of one who accepts a disagreeable task, Isabel picked up the extract from the *Courrier du Midi*, and hurried through its contents—

“One officer—thank Heaven, but one!—has deserted the tricolor flag to join the brigands of the Commune. On hearing of the insurrection of March 18th, and the murders of Generals Lecomte and Thomas, Lieutenant-Colonel Roland, head engineer officer at Nevers, secretly quitted the camp there, and proceeded to Paris to offer his services to the insurgents. The motive of this extraordinary and infamous act of desertion appears to be that, towards the end of February, this young officer (whose thought is not of his country but of promotion) had petitioned the Minister of War for a step, which was refused him. He has been appointed chief of the staff to the Communist



delegate of war, Vincent; but it would seem that he already repents of his desertion; for he is reported to have secretly written to M. Thiers, offering for a sum of 300,000 francs to put Paris into the hands of the Government. This Bayard is a military relic of the Empire; and, rumour says, was with Bazaine in Metz. If so, he has certainly profited by the example of his chief."

As she read the last words, Isabel tore the scrap of newspaper to pieces, and throwing them from her,—“You will come home with me, Louis,” she said, “and tell your mother that it was all—the story of the refused promotion, and all—an infamous lie. As for that of the bribe to betray the Commune, she only said when she read it, ‘This is not my son.’ You will come home to the Cevennes again, will you not?”

“And what a name I should leave behind me here!” said Roland; “and what a triumph I give my enemies if I desert! Pyat will tell his readers in the *Vengeur* that I was a Judas whom Thiers had bribed

to betray the Revolution to him; and Léo Meillet will get up at the next sitting of the Commune, and protest that I have been from the beginning a Versailles spy, and only pretended to resign my commission that I might avail myself of the trick to get into Paris. Yes! even Delescluze would say of me that I was like the rats, and fled from the ship because I saw it sinking."

"And who are Delescluze and Pyat?"

"Delescluze is a man; and Pyat the name of a cur that annoys me with its yelping."

"Shame, Louis!" said the girl. "When your mother's life is at stake, do you hesitate between her and the applause or execration of the wretches of the Commune? Shame on you, cousin, if you do."

"Her life! Is she so ill, then?"

"She grew worse at once when you left us to go to Tours; and after reading what I have just read to you, and finding that you were in Paris, a leader among the wretches who were plundering and murder-

ing there, she has never quitted her bed. I sent for a doctor from Nîmes—— ”

“ Well ? ” said Roland, feverishly.

“ And he says—don’t look at me so, Louis, or I shall dread to tell you !—that if her mind is not set at ease about you, she has but a few more months to live. If I was wrong, I was wrong ; but when I heard that her anxiety for you was killing her, I left her with François and Marie ; and disguised myself as you see, and came to Paris.”

“ Wrong ! ” said her cousin, remorsefully ; and clasping her impetuously to him. “ Forgive me, Bella ! Oh, my mother, my poor mother ! ”


She extricated herself from the embrace with the faintest possible blush. “ I thought,” she said, “ that dressed as—as you would wish to see me, I suppose—I ran two dangers in trying to get into Paris, and in this dress only one. It seems that I was wrong, though—half the people that look at me penetrate my foolish disguise. Even your sober general could see at once that I was a woman.”

“And you could sacrifice your splendid hair!” Roland said, regretfully.

“It is gone; and grieving for it won’t bring it back, or perhaps——” She broke off, and took out a letter, and handed it to him. “This is her message to you, Louis.”

It was an imploring prayer to him to abandon the cause of the incendiaries who had distracted France with civil war, and hasten at once to the bedside of the writer. Roland walked agitatedly up and down after reading it. “Oh,” he said, “if that *at once* were possible! Isabel, you who have already done so bravely will be my messenger to her, to take a letter from me, and tell her all? I will find some one that I can trust, to accompany you.”

“No, Louis, never,” she answered. “When I left your mother I promised myself that if I lived to reach you, I would not return to her without you, or at least without being able to say that you were coming. Stay here, if you can be so cruel; but I will stay, too. You show only too



plainly that you neither understand how your mother loves you, nor what you have made her suffer, when you ask me to go back to her alone."

Roland resumed his undecided walk about the room. "Give me a week," he broke out, presently. "In a week—come closer, Bella; I don't know who may be listening, and this is for no ears but yours—in a week I shall either be at the head of affairs here, or there will be no possibility of my remaining in Paris. Give me a week, then; and at the end of that time I will tell you whether or not I will go back with you to Château Roland."

"And in the meantime," said Isabel, "your mother——"

"Yes; but I will write to her," he interrupted. "You will not be my messenger, you say; well, I think I know where I can find one."

He rang a bell that summoned Séguier. "Find that Englishwoman who comes here so often about her husband," he said, "and bring her to me."


It was nearly an hour before the messenger returned with her.

"Madame," the chief of the staff said, handing her a letter he had written in the meantime, "you have already, I know, a passport that you can show the Versailles; and I can furnish you with a safe-conduct in and out of Paris. Here are five hundred francs; that sum will cover your expenses in carrying this letter to its address, and bringing me an answer."

"Excuse me, sir, I am not a postman," said the lady.

"You are a woman," said Roland, "and judging by the spirit I have seen you show of late, and on one other occasion when we met, no timid one—and you have a husband. You are desirous of having him let out of Mazas, are you not?"

"Yes, sir," said the lady; "and when I write to the *Times* about your sending him there——! You may smile, sir; but if England sends an army to the assistance of the Government here, to punish you for your treatment of one of her first literary



men, you and your Commune will find it no laughing matter, I can assure you. We sent one for less reason into Abyssinia."

"But," said Roland, "as far as releasing your husband is concerned, you may do the work of the army you speak of yourself, if you consent to carry this letter for me."


The lady appeared to meditate. "Yes, sir, I'll carry it," she said, at last; "but you might make the five hundred francs a thousand, I think. I'm sure a thousand pounds wouldn't cover the risk I'm running."

"I shall hold your husband as a hostage for your return, remember," Roland said, counting out the sum she asked for. "There, madam, are your thousand francs," he continued. "The day you bring me an answer to the letter I have entrusted to you, your husband shall leave Mazas."

"Lord, now," the lady soliloquized, when she had safely bestowed money and letter, and was being ceremoniously escorted back to her lodgings by a couple of National Guards, "there might be material found in all this for a novel. Let me see—Hodgson


might be turned into a French Duke, shut up in prison by the Commune, and tortured every day to make him tell 'em where the family plate and jewels are hid. I wish they'd put him on the rack—just once, I mean, and only hurt him a very little, poor fellow—there would be such capital material for a chapter in his description of his sensations. Then this French colonel, that behaves like a brute to my husband and yet seems to have something of the gentleman in him, would be the Duke's son, of course ; in love with the daughter—Suppose I made him fall in love with the daughter of that old wretch, Delescluze, and join the other wretches just to please her and her father. Lord ! I've one of 'em at each elbow. Gracious goodness ! if they understood me. Do you understand English, monsieur ? ” she demanded in the worst possible French of the citizen on her right.

“ No ! And you, m'seer ? ‘ *Ne comprends pas.* ’ Ah ! then, I may tell you what I think of you. I've seen men on trial for their lives at the Old Bailey—that's what



we call the chief court of justice in our country—and let me tell you, they looked angels beside you. A filthy, absinthe-smelling pack of murderous, thieving vagabonds! It's to be hoped that when the army get the upper hand they'll shoot the whole of you, and that colonel of yours the first. What's in this letter he has given me, I wonder? *A Madame—Madame Roland*; it's to his wife, of course. His wife!—she'll be his widow soon, I hope."

"Lord knows, though, unless I pass myself off as the English ambassador's lady or something of that kind, how I'm ever to find my way back into Paris," the lady said, doubtfully, when, a few hours later, she found herself running the gauntlet of the interrogatories put to all persons leaving the city by the troops of Versailles. "I declare I think if I were to go straight home to England, and leave the letter to find its own way to the Cevennes—I dare say there's a post—it would be the best thing I could do. Ah, no, Angie, that would be too shabby a trick, my girl, to leave your poor husband



where he is. I'm sure they'd murder him when they found you were not coming back. That Roland has the look of a man, as the song says, who could smile and smile, and murder while he smiled. Let me see, it's Moore, I think, that says—

'Thou hast called me thy angel in moments of bliss,
And thy angel I'll be 'mid the horrors of this.'

I dare say Hodgie has often called me his angel in moments of bliss at Islington ; and I'll deserve to be called so now—I will—I will."




CHAPTER X.

SEALED WITH A KISS.

“ VINCENT, at the same time that his failure as a strategist is pitiable, has two of the indispensable qualities of a general—energy and decision. Often as he has done the wrong thing at the worst possible time, it cannot be charged against him that he hesitates, or allows the enemy to take advantage of him by any inactivity. And in our situation, to do nothing would often be more ruinous than to commit a blunder.”


Impartially given, Roland's opinion of his superior would have been expressed in some such words as the above. It is difficult to be altogether impartial, however, as regards a man who dislikes and is watching for an excuse for dismissing you; and

whom you, in your turn, are hoping to replace. The young colonel contented himself with reckoning up Vincent's mistakes as a tactician, and with picturing the change that his own superior strategy would effect. Before the end of April, the gradual progress of the Versailles troops had put the entire Commune out of humour with their Minister of War, and he remained in power chiefly because the club of bickering theorists who squabbled daily at the Hôtel de Ville had so far found it impossible to agree upon the choice of a successor. Delescluze, Gérardin, and a few of the more influential and reputable leaders of the insurrection gave their voices in favour of Roland ; Félix Pyat, Léo Meillet, Raoul Rigault, and other men whose names were destined in a few weeks to become foully famous, opposed the nomination with their united rancour. Had it not entered into the *absinthe*-muddled brains of certain of the Commune to suspect him of a plot, General Vincent might have retained the chief command until the Versailles army entered Paris, and




have died behind a barricade, or fled from one.

Not many sieges described in history have been more miserably conducted than this of Paris by an army patched up out of the rags and tatters remaining from the military systems of the Empire and the Gambettist Republic. For the first fortnight after its ignominious retirement from the capital before the bayonets of an armed mob, calling itself the National Guard, the Government appeared to be persuaded that instead of a few thousand fanatical Socialist workmen, and behind them the rabble of Paris, the Commune had an army at its beck. This delusion might have lasted longer, had not the insurgents themselves been in such haste to dispel it. Victory presently sat on the crests of the besiegers, because the blunders of the besieged were yet more outrageous than their own; and after that luckless sortie of April 3rd, when, of the three insurgent generals, one led his troops where they were slaughtered in heaps by the cannon of Mont Valerien, and on



coming within range of the Versailles *chassepots*, the agitated contention of the other two masses of patriots that had sallied so defiantly out of Paris proved to be which man should quickest turn his back, the Assembly and its generals began to ask of one another whether, after all, there was anything more opposed to them than a mere mob. Considerable alacrity began now to be shown in pursuing and bayoneting fleeing insurgents; and with the reflection encouraging them that half the forts were in the hands of the Prussians, and Mont Valerien, the key to Paris, in their own, the Versaillist commanders opened a furious cannonade upon Forts Issy and Vanves. It has never been denied to M. Thiers that, if the army he sent against Paris had bad generals, it was well served by its artillerymen. "La plus belle armée de la France," as the enthusiastic President termed it, was content to look for nearly two months at positions that it might have carried in as many weeks; but if chary of valour, it was prodigal of shells. It should be remembered



also, that, if Macmahon, Ducrot, Vinoy, and Cissey, with difficulty achieved in seven weeks a task that any of the marshals of Napoleon the First would have completed in ten days, they might excuse themselves on the ground of their being new to the winning of victories, a plea historians of the war of 1870 will certainly accept.

History will also say of the Versailles forces that, if slow in striking down the Red Republic, they were prompt to stamp on it when prostrate. Other French armies may have won more laurels in the field ; but none ever surpassed this one in the art of massacring prisoners when taken. These prisoners were of one blood with their slayers, born of the same nation, speaking the same tongue—it mattered nothing. Many were women and children ; they died no less. “Paris,” exclaims a Communist writer, “cette ville de luxe, de la lumière et des plaisirs, que——” But the rest one cannot quote. One may venture to assert, however, that if the lady whom it insults entered Paris the day her chivalrous hus-

band rested from his slaughters there, she must have taken him for the resurrection of an English butcher known to history by the name of Cumberland, and have congratulated him on possessing the capital city of France for his vast slaughter-house.

During the whole of the month of April, the Versailles batteries continued monotonously to bombard Forts Issy and Vanves, while within Paris unwashed Communist officers, and privates still more averse to soap and water, spent most of their time, and the whole of their pay in the *cabaret*; and enjoyed from a distance the spectacle of the bombardment with the national enthusiasm for fireworks. No band of brothers, alone against the world, ever displayed a more touching unselfishness than did the Paris National Guard where military glory was in question. With enough of men at the command of the insurrectional government to have garrisoned the whole of the forts in its hands four and five times over, the Commune could with difficulty keep in Fort Issy a sufficient number of troops for

its defence—so fraternally anxious was every insurgent to abandon to his brother-patriots the posts of honour that less generous heroes would have coveted to make their own.

Vincent, his chief of the staff, and one or two generals of division appointed by them, excepted, the military chiefs of the Commune reeled and staggered through the streets of Paris like daws on whom a shower of peacocks' feathers had suddenly fallen—unshaven, loud-talking, and slovenly; but strutting in plumes and gold lace in all the braggart profusion of the Empire. The waving crests of Bergeret, Eudes, and other heroes, were, moreover, as constantly to the fore as that famous one of Henry of Navarre; but, unluckily for the insurgent cause, the van they led was always that of flight. Marching well to the rear of their forces when a sortie was taking place, the leaders of the chivalry of the Commune only took their post at the head of their battalions on the instant of those battalions turning their backs—a manœuvre invariably

executed as soon as the column saw Versailles breechloaders flashing in its front, and heard Versailles bullets come whistling to meet it. It was perhaps with a view to repressing this favourite evolution of the National Guard that, about the middle of April, Vincent determined to institute a permanent court-martial; and conferred the task of presiding over it upon his chief of the staff. Roland accepted the disagreeable office without hesitation. He perfectly understood that it was the aim of his superior to render him unpopular with the Commune by reason of the severity which Vincent knew the other would not fail to exercise; but he saw also with angry clearness that, unless the drunken braves, who boasted and staggered about the streets of Paris, and ran like hares from the fire of the enemy, were coerced into some approach to courage, the fall of the Commune, however remarkable the incapacity of the besiegers, was narrowed to a question of weeks.

When this court-martial had been sitting for some eight or ten days, there came

before it the case of a battalion of the National Guard, the 105th, which had done as many of its fellows had done in face of the enemy. The battalion could plead, indeed, that it had at least behaved better than its commanding-officer, who, boasting a new and very gay uniform, and being in no way desirous that it should be sullied with blood or the smoke of gunpowder, had refused to exhibit it to the Versailles troops at all. A judgment was pronounced, at the instigation of the president, condemning the 105th battalion to be disbanded, and the men belonging to it incorporated with other regiments. The sentence passed on the commanding-officer was that he should be shot.

A day or two after this episode, Roland, with a flushed face and his step hasty, came unexpectedly into the room where his cousin (who had resumed the dress proper to her sex) sat reading.

“When will you be ready to leave Paris, Isabel?” he asked, abruptly.

A light as if of sunshine came into the

brown eyes that looked up at him; the colourless cheek flushed; and the girl's features (that in repose were somewhat severe in their cold, chaste outline) lit up with an animation that left her nothing short of beautiful. Haughty, graceful, and of the tallest stature that is permitted to a woman without robbing her of half her womanliness, but softened in this instance by a nobly-shaped head and remarkable beauty of figure, this girl, when her mobile lips quivered with sudden emotion and her bright eyes grew brighter, seemed sister to the huntress Diana as that pitiless goddess may have looked when her bow rang, and her shafts sped, and the children of Niobe fell dead before her.

"Leave Paris, Louis!" she said, rising.
"In half an hour I shall be ready to start."

"We may go this evening, then." He seemed, however, to make the proposal with reluctance. "This evening—no, to-morrow will be soon enough," Roland continued. "I have to send to Issy for Clifford; and I must at least see Delescluze again. I

don't know, indeed, if it would not be well, on many accounts, to wait a day or two. To disappear the instant I have thrown up my post would seem to give colour to the reports that are certain to be spread about me."

The girl smiled, and laid her hand upon his arm. "My dear cousin," she said, "for an impulsive man, and a man always very decided and comprehensive in his plans, you are singularly fond of hesitating when the time comes to leave off thinking, and to act. I am only of what is called the weaker sex; and, of course, our weakness includes brain weakness, and it is very presumptuous of me to attempt to offer you advice, who are so much better fitted to give than to take it; but still it seems to me that if I were a soldier, and a crisis had come, I would try not to turn matters over and over in my mind, as if I were making a bargain with the Future about them, and were afraid that unless I took time for consideration I should be cheated. Did you not say to me only yesterday that the best quality of that


swaggering Vincent was his quickness in coming to a decision—that he looked at such points of a question as were most prominent, and often as he has blundered is always singularly prompt in acting.”

“And you want me to take pattern by Vincent? Thank you for your opinion of me,” said Roland.

“Does it hurt your vanity, then? I shall wound it still more if I go on, I am afraid. In the few days that I have been in Paris, Louis, I have seen more of your character than in the four years that I lived with Aunt Alison at Nîmes, and in dear old Château Roland. As far as a girl of nineteen can form an opinion, you have great military genius, and a powerful mind; but, my dear cousin, I doubt if Nature meant you to take part in revolutions. You judge of others quickly, and very seldom make mistakes. I wish that you had the same faculty when it is a question of yourself.”

“O, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as *women* see us!”

her hearer quoted, with a laugh that was a



little forced. "What is it you see in me, Bella, that I myself am so blind to? What is my chief fault as a revolution maker?"

"Do you call this miserable outbreak a revolution? And then, you found it ready made to your hands," said Isabel.

" 'How absolute the jade is,' as Harry might say, if he were here. Well, as a leader, then? Am I likely to make a worse one than Vincent, or Félix Pyat?"

"You are still busy with plans when the moment comes for acting. I hinted something of the sort to you a minute ago; but it is a truth that will bear repeating," she answered.

"Repeat it to the members of the Commune, and they will tell you that I act much too vigorously for them. They have discussed for the last two days the sentences that the court-martial I preside over—*did* preside over, I should say—had passed on the 105th Battalion of the National Guard and its commanding-officer; and last night they annulled them."

"You could not have brought me news

that I could be better pleased to hear—I can't tell you how I felt the other evening when you came in, and told me that you had just condemned a poor wretch to death."

Roland looked at her in some surprise. "You are inconsistent," he said, "even for a woman. You swear by Cromwell, do you not?—you reverence Washington—men who, if duty called on them to shed blood, valued a man's life at something less than a fly's; you find fault with me one moment for my want of energy; and yet, when I speak in the next of my having intended by one man's death to teach a hundred thousand others the lesson that running away will not enable them to keep their skins whole, you shudder; and when I tell you that the Commune has interfered, and prevented me, you reply that I have brought you the best of news. Do you know your own mind, do you think, Bella?"

"Perhaps not, Louis. Your sex—and great men especially—evidently doubt very much if women have minds at all; and how,


then, are we to be very sure of them. I don't see, though, that I talk so contradictorily."

"No!"

"No, Louis. You know what I think of this frantic insurrection that you have been mad enough to identify yourself with." Her cheek reddened, her eyes burned; and she drew herself to her full height, and spoke out haughtily, and in a voice whose accents were sweet and full, but strangely thrilling. "You know that I despise and loathe this miserable thing called the Commune from the bottom of my heart. Could I be glad, then, to see you undertaking the office of its hangman?"

"Bella!"

"Louis, if you stay another week in Paris I shall begin to hate you, I think. Do you love your mother? A year ago, I would have said that you did, and that there was no more devoted and affectionate son to be found in France; but the war would seem to have changed you. A year ago, if she had sent imploring you to come at once to



her, you would not have thought it enough to write to her. Do you forget that she is, in all probability, on her death-bed ? ”

“ I think it is you that forget,” he answered. “ You should remember, when you take this tone to me, that when you brought me my mother’s message I asked a week to consider it. But that, of course, was one of the proofs that I hesitate when I ought to act. I suppose it seemed so to you, Isabel ? ”

“ Perhaps,” she answered.

“ Well, there are three days of that week left yet, but I shall not need them. The Commune relieved me this morning from my functions as president of the court-martial—or hangman, as you prefer to call me—and ten minutes afterwards I resigned my appointment as chief of the staff to Vincent. I am nothing now but a deserter from the army that is besieging Paris, and certain to be shot the moment I fall into the hands of the Versailles. I don’t know but that the best course I could take would be to wait for their finishing assault on

Paris, and then post myself behind the first barricade that is attacked, and die there. Delescluze will fall so, if I know the man."

"You would not do anything so cowardly," said Isabel. "If you are what I have always thought you, you will scorn such a weakness as this suicide—and you will leave Paris at once. It would kill your mother very quickly, if she heard that you were dead."

"You love her very dearly, cousin."

"As if she were my own mother, Louis. She has been one to me since I was left an orphan."

"She gave me life, and has made yours happy, you say. We have both of us dreamed dreams, perhaps. I, of achieving great things; you, I suppose, of a lover with a handsomer face and gayer temper than poor Louis Roland. Can you bid farewell to yours, if I say adieu to mine? Can you join your life to mine, and let them both be devoted to making the remainder of hers pass happily?"


She looked at him with a startled sus-

picion dawning in her glance. "Our lives, Louis. Do you mean that—that—" Her voice trembled in spite of herself.

"Yes, I mean our marriage," he answered. "It is that I would speak of, if I dare renew the subject to you. You know that my mother's dearest hope in life is to see us united. When I made you an offer two years ago of such heart as I have to give a woman, you refused it. She has either heard of that refusal from yourself, or does not know yet of my having spoken to you."

"Thank you, cousin," said Isabel.

"You see plainly what sort of a husband it is that offers himself to you?" he asked—"a man so madly attached to his country that he thought even civil war better than a peace that was bought at the price of her honour. You are the only woman, cousin, that I have ever sought to call my wife; but I do not offer you all my heart—I gave too much of it to my first love, France. Ah! what a rage there was in it on the day when the Prussians entered Paris."



"I know—I know," she answered, taking his hand.

"What a tender voice you have at times, Bella," he said, lifting the shapely fingers to his hot forehead. "I wonder whether, if we were to marry, it could soothe me into forgetting that I dreamed of 'saving my country, and that I have not been able even to die for her. Will you marry me, Bella? If I go back with you to Château Roland, will you let me take your hand as soon as we are arrived at the bedside of her who lies dying there, and say to her, 'Mother, this daughter of yours has promised to be my wife?'"


She leaned towards him with downcast eyes; and he caught her in his arms and kissed her. "I have not the love for you that a woman should have for her husband," she said, as she released herself. "Heaven grant that it may come to me when we are wedded!"

CHAPTER XI.

EQUALITY.

“To-morrow or next day,” Roland had replied to Isabel’s question as to when they should quit Paris, as his betrothed and he were parting. On leaving her, he returned to the Ministry of War; and passed some time there, writing letters, and destroying and arranging papers. He was still busied with these preparations for taking leave of the drama of insurrection in which he had played so brief a part, when he heard the sound of a footstep, and looking up, found himself face to face with some one who had just entered.

“You!” he said, springing on his feet.
“The man of all the world I most wanted to see!”



"Have you heard of what is taking place at Issy, then?" asked Clifford. "I thought I would be the first to bring you the news."

"And what is taking place at Issy?"

"That drunken coward, Méry, swears that the fort is untenable, and wants to abandon it. You have not a moment to lose—it will be almost impossible to arrive there in time, as it is."

"I!" Roland sat down again, and smiled. "Carry your news to Vincent, or to the Commune, captain. The insurrection and I have parted company."

The other stared at him at first as if incredulous; and then his face flushed up, and suddenly unbuckling his sword, he threw it, sheath and all, at Roland's feet. "When you made me put this on," he said, "I did not think there was so little use to be made of it. But are you serious, Louis? I came here expecting to find you delegate of war in Vincent's stead. Has he dismissed you? Why do you give way so tamely?"

"I have resigned," said Roland. "To-

morrow or next day I shall attempt to leave Paris."

"But what has happened, then?" his lieutenant asked, anxiously.

"For one thing, I have quarrelled with the Commune. For another, my mother is ill—dying, perhaps—and sends, praying me to come to her."

"It is sad news; how did it reach you?"

"She has sent Isabel to me. If half the National Guard were of the spirit of that girl, there might be some hope of the Commune yet."

"And she has not feared to make her way into Paris?"

"Feared! she does not know the meaning of the word 'fear.'"

"Is she still in Paris?"

"She refuses to return without me. I cannot but feel that she is right; for it was hearing of my being in Paris that has preyed on my mother's mind until her life is in danger."

"My poor aunt!" Clifford said, regretfully. "So, it is all over, then?" he said,

after a pause. "You acknowledge that Alsace and Lorraine must be given up to the Prussians, and the rest of France to M. Thiers and the Assembly?"

"Yes, I know that I have disappointed you," said Roland.

"At least, when you left Nevers I thought that it was to do something more than be aide-de-camp for a month to a swaggering bravo, and then fling up the game when the winning card was in your hand."

"The winning card? Show it to me," said Roland.

"I mean Vincent's arrest."

"His arrest! He is not arrested."

"If he is not arrested yet, he will be. When I threatened Méry with a cell in Mazas if he evacuated Issy, he laughed, and asked me who would send him there. 'In twelve hours,' said Méry, 'the delegate of war will himself be in Mazas.'"

Roland turned from the speaker without making any answer; and began, as *his* manner was when thinking earnestly, to pace slowly about the room.

“And Delescluze, Gérardin, Varlin, all the best men of the Commune are eager to have you in his place. Go to your mother’s bedside, Louis—I dare not say to you, ‘Keep away from it,’ when her life is in danger—but—but I begin to doubt if you are what I thought you were.”

Clifford paused, as if in expectation of an answer; and finding that his cousin returned him none, was about to say something more, when Roland stopped him with an impatient gesture of the hand.

“Don’t speak to me—don’t speak to me,” he said.

He threw himself into the nearest chair, and resting his chin upon his hand, sat silent.

“And when does Méry mean to evacuate Issy?” he asked at last.

“He had begun to spike the guns before I left.”

“Back, then; and try if you are still in time to stop him. Stay! here is a written order for him to hold the fort until relieved.” He dashed it off, and handed it to his

cousin. "Tell him I will be in Issy in two hours with reinforcements; and that it will be well for him that I find him there," he said.

Clifford stepped hastily forward, and wrung the speaker by the hand. "Ah, now you are what I would have you!" he said. In another instant he was outside the Ministry of War, and hurrying full speed towards Fort Issy.

Roland hardly knew that he had gone; he was standing with one hand closing on his sword-hilt, the other hanging heavy by his side, looking haggardly into space. Sad, reproachful, with eyes wherein a look of love seemed to struggle through a film as of death, his mother's face rose up before him, and made accusing the vacancy into which he gazed. "Oh," he muttered to himself, "if she dies, and I have not seen her! Oh, France, France! you have only cost me errors as yet, but this is crime!"

Issy lay abandoned when Clifford reached it. The Versailles troops, indeed—suspecting, as was afterwards learned, that the fort


as mined—had as yet made no attempt to occupy it. The retiring commandant had, as a matter of fact, mined the place—a small cask of powder having been placed in the barrow, and wheeled under the entrance—ad ; in charge of which extensive preparations for hurling Issy into the air a lad of seventeen had been left. This simple hero was standing firm at his post when Clifford entered.

While the young Englishman was questioning him, the trampling of feet was heard overhead ; and thinking that the Versaillais were at last entering, he drew his revolver, and sprang out to sell his life as dearly as possible. He found himself, however, in the presence of Vincent and several of the officers of his staff.

“The garrison?” the general cried to him. “Where is Méry?”

“In Paris, general, by this time.”

Vincent broke out with an oath ; and ordering some of his companions to await his return with troops, hastened off with the rest towards the city. The officers of




his staff who were left turned back with Clifford into the fort ; and finding that Méry had neglected when abandoning it to spike two of the few pieces of cannon that the storm of shells hurled from the Versailles batteries had left serviceable, re-opened with these two guns some faint semblance of a fire.

Whether deceived by this show of resistance into believing the fort re-occupied, or still fearing that a snare had been laid for them, the besiegers contented themselves with replying furiously ; and nearly three hours passed without any attempt having been made to carry Issy by assault. At the end of that time, Colonel Roland, at the head of a few hundred federals whom he had collected, marched out of Paris, and re-garrisoned the fort. Vincent did not return ; he had been encountered on entering Paris by an order of arrest, and about the time that his late chief of the staff occupied Issy was conducted to a cell at Mazas.

There appeared next morning a placard announcing the abandonment and re-occu-

pation of the fort, and signed *Roland, délégué à la guerre*. The minority of the Commune had won a momentary triumph over the majority; and Delescluze, Gérardin, Avrial, and some half-dozen others, after voting as cordially as their incensed colleagues of the majority the removal from power of the discredited Vincent, had, almost to their own surprise, succeeded in establishing the ex-colonel of engineers in his place. Felix Pyat complained in his journal, *Le Vengeur*, that the Revolution was betrayed.

The morning upon which a change in the signature of the bulletins announced to Paris that the helm of war was transferred to other hands than those that had been grasping it now for nearly a month was that of the first of May. Returning about day-break to the Ministry of War, Roland snatched a few hours' sleep on his hard bed in one of the garrets there; this young soldier not being, like many a transformed Lazarus of the Commune, accustomed to fare gluttonously every day, and at night stagger, half-intoxicated, to pillows of down.



When he rose, he took Séguier (a man whom he liked and trusted, and was on the point of naming his chief of the staff) with him to a fourth-rate restaurant at which he was accustomed to breakfast. He would have named Clifford chief of his staff; but his cousin's ignorance of military science unfitted him for holding any such position; and Séguier had been trained at the Polytechnique, and had to some extent distinguished himself there. Over the indifferent meal that was served them, the two young men sat chatting of the prospects of the Commune, and reading in the journals of the insurrectionary party comments on the revolution effected at the Ministry of War. *Le Mot d'Ordre*, Rochefort's paper, faintly approved of the change; a second journal had already invented a biography of the new minister, flattering and incorrect; the pen of Le Père Duchêne, as venal as vile, was very much at his service; and only that of Félix Pyat, among the more influential journalists of the Commune was dipped in an ink adulterated with venom, and over-

flowing with gall. Roland laid down the last of the journals he had been eagerly scanning; and felt relieved. The press, that had been Vincent's most bitter enemy, was not, for the present, one he had to reckon with. "I will make *that* my chief of the staff," he muttered to himself, as he looked at Séguier sitting opposite to him.

A figure passing outside attracted his attention; and he started up, and looked keenly after the unconscious Isabel. "She is going to the Ministry of War. Follow her, and give her this," he said, handing to his companion the *Vengeur*, with Pyat's ferocious greeting in it to the new War Delegate of the Commune. "Ask her to read it while she waits for me; and tell her I will be with her in ten minutes." He sat down; and, as he finished his breakfast, meditated very uncomfortably upon the interview in prospect.

There was no scene, however, in the *bureau* of the Ministry. The girl, who was standing near a window, simply beckoned him to her as he entered, and pointed to

some figures in the street. "And these," she said, in a tone of infinite contempt, "are the heroes you are general of! It is to command such wretches that you break your promise to me, and keep away from your mother's death-bed!"

The troop she pointed to was one of between two and three hundred National Guards. A couple of hours before, these zealous patriots had rushed noisily into the Grand Hotel, demanding to be shown to the vaults beneath the building, in which they said, were at that moment hidden troops secretly introduced into the city from Versailles. It is dry work hunting for concealed enemies among dusty casks and cobwebbed bottles. When the federals at last staggered out of the cellars in which they had been searching, their brains and their gait were alike reeling, and the proprietor of the Grand Hotel was poorer by some two thousand francs' worth of his choicest wines.

As he looked, the young man's eyes began to sparkle, and the expression of his face

became harsh and gloomy. The scene before the Ministry of War might have irritated Vincent himself—a more jovial-tempered commander-in-chief than Louis Roland; and it set his successor longing to give short shrift to every man concerned in it. Drunken, noisy, their uniforms smeared with dirt and stained with wine, their *chassepots* more dangerous to one another, and to passers-by, than the Versaillais had ever found them, the troop of federals staggered past the window from which their chief was looking on them; some puffing at prime cigars, others laden with provisions; and not a few displaying to each other watches, jewellery, and spoons that they had stolen. There were even porters of silver plate in the gang; and one or two of the more daring of the scoundrels had taken a leaf from the book of the Prussians, and carried on one shoulder a *chassepot*, and on the other a clock.

“Come, cousin, show yourself,” the girl said, presently. “This is the first morning of your appointment; and here are the


flower of the National Guard, fresh from the wine-shops, and waiting for you to review them. You will show yourself, surely."

"What can I do?" Roland said, turning from the window. "I have not the means at present of punishing this kind of thing with death; and nothing but shooting a number of these scoundrels will ever frighten them into discipline."

"Oh yes; there are more ways of frightening them than by actually shooting them. Take them out of Paris, and show them the enemy; and you will find them frightened enough."

"I know you have reason to be in a bitter humour this morning," said Roland; "but you surely have not come here only to mock at me."

"To mock at you, Louis! At the man whom the Commune delights to honour? I should expect to be handed over to the most sober of those heroes outside there, and allowed just as much time as it would take them to put down the stolen property they are carrying, and load, to make my



peace with heaven. No, I have come to be your companion to the Cevennes. It was to-day that we were to start, I think."

"Yes," he answered, "but—but——" His eyes fell before the scornful light in hers; and he turned from her, and walked a step or two across the room. "Cousin," he said, coming back to her—"for I dare call you nothing but cousin now—forgive me."


"You dare call me nothing now but cousin. Do you forget, then, what you asked of me only yesterday, and the answer I made? Or have you repented already of having asked me to be your wife?"

"I repent," he said, "that I have lost you."

"It is not a falsehood, then? The Commune have really offered you the command-in-chief of these ruffians, and you have accepted this honourable command? You mean, after your yesterday's promises to me, to stay in Paris?"

"Yes," he answered, "I have made up my mind to remain in Paris."

She looked at him with eyes in which



scorn burned more and more brightly, "Twenty-four hours ago," she said, "you had made up your mind that you would return to the Cevennes. You have a mind, then, that is altogether at the mercy of circumstances? I don't mean to say that I despise you, Louis; but——" She stopped, as if some bitter thought had risen and checked her. "Oh," she said, speaking as though to some invisible listener; "and to think that it was only yesterday he promised me that in a few days he would be at his mother's bedside! Yes! he will end by making me despise him."

These last of her words were all to which Roland listened. "And so," he said, "you despise me? It is natural, perhaps, that you should—you are a daughter of France, indeed, but only by adoption. If you had been one by birth, Bella, you would own that while there remains any possibility of striking a blow for my country I am right in remaining here to strike it."

"A blow for your country—At her heart, do you mean?" she said bitterly.

Roland started, as if from a stab. "You have a sharp tongue, even for a woman," he said, coldly. "We have but a few minutes more to spend together this morning—are we to pass the whole of them in quarrelling?"

"No, Louis, that would be a folly." She went up to him, and rested her hand half-caressingly upon his shoulder. "For your mother's sake and mine," she said, her voice softening, "keep your promise to me, and go to her. It is still your promised wife that asks it of you."

"And would you marry me, Bella, if I did? A man whom you despise, you say."

"I will both marry you and honour you. Only tell me that before night we shall both of us be out of Paris, and I will ask your pardon for everything I have said."

A shadow passed across his face as he looked at her—the shadow of a last yearning, a final regret. "You are better acquainted with Shakspeare than most women, Bella. Who is it that says,

'I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die?'"

“I have forgotten.”

“Well, whoever spoke the words, they are running in my mind at this moment. Yesterday I might have left Paris without disgrace ; but to-day—— ”

“And why does it disgrace you to-day to keep your word of yesterday?” she interrupted. “Why is it that, after what has passed between us, you have accepted from the Commune the appointment of Minister of War?”

“Yes,” he said, “I know that I am false to you, whatever I may be to France. Give me a fortnight to try what I can do for her; and if I fail, and the Commune falls, I will escape from Paris, if I am still living, and come to my mother and you in the Cevennes.”


She looked earnestly at him, as if, passing by his words, she sought to read from his face what was in his mind; and then a light of disdain and anger again shone in her eyes, and she turned away. “My poor aunt!” she said, “and I once thought her fortunate in her son!”

"Here is a pass signed by myself and five members of the Commune," her cousin went on. "Léo Séguier, my chief of the staff, will see you clear of Paris. I hate the thought of your putting on the dress again in which you came here; but perhaps it will be as well that you should resume it, and pass with the Versaillais for a young Englishwoman who detests the Commune, and had adopted this disguise to run the less risk of insult in escaping."

"I may run the more perhaps. I don't know that the dress you speak of protected me much in coming here," she answered.

"As you please," he said. "I had rather, for my part, see you in the dress proper to your sex, but on the whole I think that disguise will be safer."

"I look my part so badly, I am afraid, that every one who comes across me sees at once that, like Viola, 'I am not what I am.' Well, I must make an effort to appear more manly, I suppose," said the girl. "You have a part to play, too, cousin; and I doubt if you will succeed



any better in it than I in mine," she continued. "Will you save France in a fortnight, do you say? and with only the help of the drunken *canaille* that are still bawling the *Marseillaise* as we talk?" She looked at him with something of pity dawning in her glance. "It seems, then, Louis," she said, "that you are a Hercules—"

He took her two hands, and drawing her towards him, kissed her lightly on the cheek. "I wish you could have loved me," he said. "If you had even cared but a little for me, I think you would have been blinder to my faults."

"Why do you every day change and change?" she answered. "You make me pity you, and almost scorn you, when I see you so resolved to deceive yourself into the belief that it is only because you have not been at the head of affairs that you have failed as yet to do anything great, and that within the next fortnight we shall hear of marvels. You say you have set your life upon a cast now; and will stand the hazard. I think over what has passed in the last

few days, and it forces me to comprehend that when the moment comes for the throwing of the die you will shrink back."

For all answer, he dropped one of the hands that he was still holding, and led her to the window. A glorious May sun was shining upon Paris, and lighting up the face of the beautiful city with smiles. He pointed to a Communist flag that was floating opposite to them. "You see," he said, "it is the colour of the hands of Cain. When Delescluze said to me, 'You are delegate of war,' I thought to myself, 'I have to choose between abandoning the little that is left me of the hope I came to Paris with, and dyeing my hands as red as our flag.' Well, I choose the last. Do you still think, Isabel, that when the die is to be thrown I shall shrink back?"

"I hope so, at least," she answered, mournfully.

Her eyes met his; and he caught her suddenly to him, and held her fast.

"A last kiss, sweet, and forget me!" Their lips just touched for a moment; and then

she drew herself away. "You will not have much to forget, I see," he said, half bitterly, as she thus shrank from the embrace that he had claimed. "Give your hand where your heart goes, Bella—I make you free of your promise to me. I loved you as well as I shall ever love woman; but—but—— Try to comfort my mother, cousin, if you should hear before the world is many days older that I am dead. Perhaps I may live through what is before me; and she may forget it and what is past when I come to her again."

CHAPTER XII.


FRATERNITY.

"It is forbidden, under penalty of death, to continue firing after the order to cease fire has been given, or to disobey when a halt has been ordered. Fugitives, and those who remain isolated in the rear, will be sabred by the cavalry; if numerous, the cannon will open upon them."

On this sinister threat appearing one morning in *Le Journal Officiel*, the Commune at once sent for the author of the announcement, the new delegate of war.

"You command heroes," said Vallès, the president of the day, to him; "why insult them?"

"Is it an insult, then, to declare that I require an army; and that, since my prede-



cessor has failed to leave me one, there is no time to be lost in creating what I require?" Roland answered.

"And what, then, has he left you?" demanded Vallès.

"Heroes, you say; and it is out of heroes that armies are made. This," continued the speaker, indicating the paragraph in *Le Journal Officiel*, "is my notice to all whom it may concern that I intend to set about the task."

"And our consent?" said Pyat. "What! it is not to be asked? and yet it was from us that you received the command of the battalions that you talk of causing the cavalry to sabre, and the cannon to open upon. Not too fast, my little Buonaparte! There has been a treason Bazaine, citizens; take care that there is not a treason Roland to match it. An army! Yes, to sell Paris to the Assembly, as Bazaine sold Metz to the Prussians. The citizen delegate was in Metz, remember."

"Where Bazaine," said Léo Meillet, "may have taught him how to plot."

Roland looked from one to the other without replying, and Delescluze intervened.


"It was not with Bazaine that the citizen plotted," he said; "but against him."

"Yes," said Pyat, "as the other day he was plotting against Vincent. The citizen Roland will always be ready to plot, if he thinks that he can get rid of his general, and take his place. It seems to me that he has a hankering for ours. Watch him well, citizens, I warn you; or some morning, when the people of Paris rise, and ask 'Where is the Commune?' this young citizen will perhaps step out, and say with an air *Louis-Quatorze*—'*La Commune*?—*C'est moi!*'"

"We may prevent that," said Meillet, "by establishing the citizen delegate's headquarters at Mazas, in the next cell to that of Vincent."

Roland smiled bitterly. "If every man in Paris," he said, "whom Citizen Pyat has declared that he suspected were in Mazas, the prison would be full."

"*Parbleu!*" said Gérardin, "six Mazases would be full."



"No, it is not from me that the Revolution is in danger," the delegate of war proceeded. "It is our quarrels that betray it; and the traitors to it are those who provoke them. While we cast hard words at each other, the Versailles batteries throw shells into our forts."

"As for that," said Pyat, "I reply——"

"You reply," said Roland, interrupting him with considerable vivacity, "that it is nothing to you that while you are putting me into Mazas, the Versailles army should be on the point of entering Paris. When the ship sinks, you will do as you have done before—you will dive under water, and reappear in London, Brussels, or Geneva."

This allusion to the conspicuous genius that Pyat had shown for escaping with life and liberty from the plots and insurrectional outbreaks in which he had taken part, provoked some slight sounds of applause. The editor of the *Vengeur* looked about him with a malignant scowl.

"It seems, then, that I have enemies here—*Bien*—I shall know well how to deal

with them when the time comes," he said, imprudently.

The speech was evidently regarded by more than one present in the light of a challenge.

"You will deal with me! How will you deal with me?" Avrial cried, springing out, and confronting him.


"Or with me?" echoed Gérardin, starting to his feet. "I ask the citizen Pyat if he did not look at me as he spoke?"

"Oh, these follies! always these follies!" said Delescluze, impatiently. "Have we not enough of enemies without, that we must be at enmity among ourselves? I appeal to citizen Pyat, in the name of the Revolution, to withdraw his words."

"For the sake of the Revolution," said Pyat, ungraciously, "I consent to withdraw them."

"And we—we forget them," Gérardin and Avrial cried, in a breath.

"We resume, then," continued Delescluze, "the discussion of the order of the day that the citizen delegate of war has



issued. Well, I declare to you that I approve of that order."

"You approve of it," said Pyat, astounded. —
"You!"

Delescluze threw a long glance round the assembly. "Have I ever till now," he asked, looking from member to member of the Commune as he spoke, "pleaded with you in favour of the shedding of blood?"

Gérardin answered him. "You have pleaded with us," he said, "to spare it, when the interests of the Revolution demanded of us that it should be shed."

"As I will plead again, I hope," the old man said, calmly; "but it will be when the Revolution has been saved. For the moment, it is in danger; and that danger becomes from day to day more terrible. There must be discipline."

"There *is* discipline," replied Pyat; "the discipline of enthusiasm."

"It abandoned Issy," said Delescluze. "It is not the discipline that the delegation of war proposes to give us."


"And what, then, does he say tha

“An army first, and then victory,” Roland said, taking up the word; “but I must be left free to act.”

“The citizen delegate mistakes,” replied Pyat, with a sneer. “The National Guard is not an army; nor are its battalions regiments, nor its citizens soldiers. We will not have them treated as such.”

A considerable number of his auditors applauded, and several voices repeated, with more or less of emphasis, “We will not have them treated as such.”

From the direction of the Arc de Triomphe there sounded, sullen and continuous, the dull roar of the bombardment. Roland waited until silence was restored; and then, with a gesture of his hand towards the quarter from whence came that sinister voice, “You hear the cannon of Thiers,” he said. “In three weeks, at the rate the siege goes on, they will have reduced Issy and Vanves to heaps of ruins; and battered a breach in the *enceinte* at the Point du Jour, for the army to enter by. Give me leave to conduct the defence as the interests



of the public safety demand, or I will not say that this can be prevented."

The members of the Commune looked at each other doubtfully, and without replying.

"Pshaw!" Meillet at last said, breaking this silence, "they would not dare."


"Let them enter," said a second. "It is in the streets that we will meet them."

"Paris bristling with barricades will become their tomb. The barricade is the true defence of Paris; and it is behind it that the heroic population of our city fight the best."

"And these barricades," said Arnould, afterwards historian of the Commune, "are they made?"

"They are making. Barricades for a whole city cannot be finished in a day," Meillet answered, hastily.

During this by-play Pyat had seemed to be deliberating. "Citizens," he now said, rising, "I have a plan to propose to you that will do more to save the Revolution than slaughtering its defenders, as the citizen delegate of war proposes, if they



chance to be carried away by their ardour to meet the enemy." Roland smiled disdainfully as he heard the words. "It is to say to the Versailles, 'You murder us when you take us prisoners; you refuse quarter to the outposts that you surprise; you throw shells into our city that assassinate the mother as she watches beside the cradle of her infant, while the father is fighting at Neuilly, or in the forts. For a month now you have butchered us as if we were wild beasts; and in excuse for yourself you have protested to Europe that it is indeed wild beasts you slay; that we are cut-throats, bandits, galley-slaves.—Liars! assassins! we are men as yet; and men we would wish to continue; but the day that your wolves rush to devour us through a breach made by your cannon in the walls of Paris, beware that it is not into a tiger's den they thrust themselves.'"

The Commune all applauded him. "Ah, yes," said Avrial, "they will find that we know how to die!"

"Die!" replied Pyat; "yes; but die

when we have taken our revenge. We hold Paris—we hold palaces, hotels, the Bank——”

“Ah,” said Roland to himself, “I begin to comprehend, I fancy.”

“Let the entry of our assassins be the signal for putting the torch to all this. Let our answer to the proclamations of Thiers and the husband of La—— be made by putting powder into the cellars of their houses, and blowing the *salons* above those cellars into the air. While our enemies are outraging women and assassinating the wounded, let us be charging the last cannon that remain to us with their title-deeds and the gold that we have taken from their bankers. When they enter Paris, let them find it Moscow. Will the change be to their taste? Say, brothers, will the funeral pyre that we shall have lighted for ourselves be to their taste?”

Applause from all sides replied to the orator and encouraged him. “*Vive Pyat!*” cried several. “*Vive l’incendie!*”

“*Le pétrole, ——,*” said, with a ferocious

Oath, a man who entered at that moment.
“Let us lay the dust on the carpets of the ——”


“Ah, yes, Raoul—yes, my brother!” cried Pyat. “The carpets, first, of Thiers.”

The hated name provoked a howl of fury.
“*Ah, Thiers!*” cried one. “Thiers, who seeks with his shells to finish the work of the Prussians! It is he who says to his artillerymen, ‘Fire on the quarters inhabited by workmen.’ At the next house of a workman that one of the accursed missiles shatters let us lay the house of Thiers in ashes.”

“At present, he calls himself President of the Republic. He will seek soon, he threatens us, the title of *Monsieur de Paris*. He will enter the city, he says, *en bourreau*, and with a hundred thousand other executioners following him.”

“He will cut the throat of every National Guard—of every workman.”

“Will he shoot us down in the streets?” cried Meillet. “At least, then, comrades, when he shoots let him have, as the citizen



Pyat proposes, the light of the whole city—burning to take aim by.”

“No, we will not burn all Paris—the are houses enough of the rich without touching those of our brothers,” objected a colleague.

Rigault, by an exception to his rule, seemed to have presented himself tolerably sober at this sitting of the Commune. He now interfered, and took the word. “Citizens,” he said, with an air of ferocious jocularity, “when our glorious forefathers of ’93 had made a traitor to the Republic sneeze out of the national window, they took his property, when the guillotine had taken his head. Does the Commune charge me, as its Minister of Justice, to seize on the property of the traitor Thiers?”

“Yes, yes,” cried several; “and to burn his house.”

“Burn? No, blow it up,” other voices amended.


“Let it be pulled down,” said Avrial. “If these things are done at all, let them be done in order.”

"Ah, yes," said the painter Courbet, who was sitting near him, "let all that be done in order. Before Thiers' house, the Column Vendôme."

"The Column Vendôme?" said Gérardin. "Better that we should throw down the statue from it, and leave the column where it is. It has cost us much; and it is associated with our glory as a nation."

"Yes, it has cost us much," said Pyat; "it has cost us millions of lives on the plains of Germany, and in the Russian snows! Down with it, down with the insolent symbol of military despotism, that bloody negation of the rights of man!"

Pyat's oratory produced its accustomed effect. The assembly effervesced with a response of "*À bas la Colonne Vendôme!*" and Courbet was already on his legs to speak, when an interruption from Delescluze prevented him. "We are not here for the citizen Pyat to make fine speeches; we are met here to discuss the order to the National Guard that has been issued by the citizen delegate of war," the old Jacobin



said, impatiently. "It is not a question of the Vendôme Column, or of burning houses—

"*Parbleu !*" said Pyat, "the citizen-delegate tells us that, in return for having entrusted the conduct of the defence to him, in three weeks he will have let the Versailles into our streets. Will it not be a question then of burning that which we cannot keep ?"

"*Peste !*" Rigault put in, jocularly, "a proper blaze to dance the Carmagnole by! Ah! if Papa Marat could have had such a fire lit in '93, how he would have run out of his cellar and warmed his old hands at it!"

"*Sapristi !* and Le Père Duchêne? Bon Papa Hébert!" said another, "how he would have capered in front of it, and sung,

' Dansons la Carmagnole !
Vive le son
Du canon ! ' "

"Yes, yes," said Rigault, "long live the sound of the cannon; but long live the little implement, too, that bites off heads and makes no noise about it! Ah! if we

Had but a guillotine, and a few shaven crowns out of La Roquette—Monsieur the Archbishop of Paris and his monks—for the holy mother to kiss.”

Delescluze for a moment lost control of himself. “Ah! *misérable*,” he said, his voice shaking with passion, “so you would play the part of a Fouquier-Tinville! It is when it has wretches like thee and him as its Ministers of Justice that a Revolution is in danger.” He turned to the assembly. “No, we will not assassinate because we are opposed to assassins,” he said. “Leave it to Versailles to cut the throats of prisoners.”

“But what would you have us do, then?” said Félix Pyat. “Are we to die like sheep?”

Though the demand was addressed to Delescluze, it was the delegate of war who replied to it. “You have been teaching us for this half-hour now how to die,” he said, disdainfully. “Is it so certain, then, that we need die?” He turned from him and addressed the Commune. “Before we set

Paris on fire and throw ourselves into the flames, citizens, would it not be as well seek if there be no way left to conquer?"

The members of the Commune who were favourable to him applauded. "*Vive le délégué à la guerre!*" cried several. Vallès, president of the sitting, rang his bell. "*La parole,*" said the president, "*est au citoyen Roland.*"

"Speak cautiously, citizen," Pyat cried to him in sneering parody of Danton. "Remember that many good citizens are listening to you."

"And also the citizen Pyat," said the man whom he addressed.


At first Pyat seemed disposed to retort, and had risen as if to speak, but he sat down again without saying anything; and remained quietly listening to Roland, with folded arms and a sneer upon his lips. The reply that he deferred appeared the following morning in *Le Vengeur*. "He insults me," said the editor, in speaking of the delegate of war; "he dares to term me dangerous to the Revolution—he who is

himself the representative of all that is dangerous, of all that is traitorous. I accuse him, Judas that he is—before you, people of Paris, I accuse him—of having engaged to place Forts Issy and Vanves in the hands of the enemy, at the price of half a million of francs for each fort.”

This accusation referred to the fact that Roland had attempted, with no great success, to persuade the Commune that the principal attack of the besiegers was directed against these forts, and their other, in the direction of Neuilly and Asnières, no more than a feint. He demanded full powers to organize a compact military force out of the chaos of the National Guard.

“With twenty thousand men fit to take the field,” he said, “I will engage to give battle to the Versailles troops under the guns of Issy, and drive them from before that fort.”

“With twenty thousand men,” interrupted Felix Pyat, “one might venture on a *coup d'état*. Remember the Man of Sedan, citizens, and December, 1851; and



say if you will put it in the power of any other traitor to repeat that crime."

"And while you deal with these vague fears," said Roland, "remember also that you are besieged by a hundred and fifty thousand men, who will certainly be in Paris before the month is out, if you continue to oppose to them a mob and not an army."

A short and stormy debate ensued. The art of debating, as understood and practised in the Commune of Paris, commonly embraced a rapid and furious exchange of personalities, a hastily patched-up compromise, and a more or less effusive reconciliation. On the present occasion, Raoul Rigault, after a lively altercation with several of his colleagues who supported Roland, dashed on his hat, and crying to the delegate of war, "Citizen, the finest day of my life will be that on which I arrest you," abruptly quitted the assembly. In his absence, the usual compromise was arrived at. The Commune, more jealous of the authority it had usurped than of the

Lives of the raw militia who were fighting under its standard, consented to leave the delegate of war at liberty to re-organize the National Guard with the help of what severities he pleased; but decided that the burden of the defence of Paris should be lightened for him by associating with him in the task a commission consisting of five of its members. These red-scarved dignitaries were nominally to preside over the artillery, the commissariat, etc.; but at heart the Commune had bethought itself of the policy of Danton and Robespierre, who, when sending out generals to encounter Clairfait and Brunswick, deputed also spies to watch the generals. Roland consented with a bad grace to appointments that it would have been to no purpose to oppose; and returned to the Ministry of War with the names and respective dispositions towards himself of the members of the commission occupying his thoughts. "Avrial, Tridon—I may manage them," he told himself. "Eudes—Eudes must be watched; it was he, and that other im-

becile, Bergeret, who devised the sortie of April 3rd. So, *Messieurs, les politiques de la Commune*, you have set these five spies to watch if I plot against you. If Tridon, whose eye I take to be the sharpest among them, could spy into my mind, what would he read there? Something to this effect perhaps: 'If the insurrection is to be saved, it must be by means of a dictatorship.' "

" Well, Séguier, you have seen her out of Paris ? "

" No, *mon colonel*," said his chief of the staff; " I was detained at the Hôtel de Ville till an hour after the time appointed; and the lady, it seems, had decided not to wait for me. When I went to her lodgings, she was gone."

" She had better have waited for your escort. The streets of Paris are not the safest in the world for a woman at present, even if she is disguised, and carries arms. After all, though, a pass signed by members of the Commune is no bad protection as yet, whatever it may be in a week or two. Is there anything of importance from Issy ? "

"Citizen Arnaud sends asking for reinforcements; and citizen Clifford writes that the garrison are inclined to mutiny."

"Ah! if Clifford were in the place of Arnaud! But the appointment would be too disagreeable to the Commune."

"Yes," said Séguier; "and the garrison would perhaps refuse to obey him."


"I would shoot a few of them," said Roland, "if necessary. Any news from the citizen in command of Vanves?"

"This despatch, *mon colonel*."

Roland read it, and threw it from him with an impatient air. "Always the same parrot-cry," he muttered. "'*Send reinforcements instantly, or the fort must be abandoned.*' Oh, if these are men, I wish that the women of France were the tools I had to work with!"

He discussed with Séguier the course to be taken regarding the commandant of Vanves; and sent him off presently on a mission to that fort.

The chief of the staff had hardly left him, when a voice that could be heard mixing



up oaths with words of command sounded loudly in the ante-room; and in another instant the chief of police, divested of much of his recent sobriety, presented himself in all the dignity of gold lace and *eau de vie*. "*Salut et fraternité, citoyen,*" said that estimable functionary.

Roland remembered the speech with which the other had parted from him an hour before, and rose sharply. "Is the finest hour of your life arrived?" he demanded. "Have you accepted a mission to arrest me?"

"*Nom de diable*, citizen," said the unabashed Rigault, "do you bear malice because of a few sharp words? A glass of *absinthe* to wash them from your memory."

"*Absinthe!*" said the other, and stopped; but the tone in which he had echoed the word was sufficiently expressive.

Rigault laughed, and contrived a noise in imitation of the pop of a champagne-cork. "The sparkler, then? Sup with Ferré and myself at the Trois Frères this evening," he


said. "The best wine in Paris, and the prettiest lips to help you drink it. *Diable*, citizen, one should have one's pleasures under a Republic."

Roland brusquely and even contemptuously refused this invitation to share in one of the orgies that the delegate of police notoriously organized almost nightly; and again demanded to know what had brought his visitor to the Ministry of War.

Rigault, who seemed to have his temper under singular command, the more singular from his evident condition, heard the rejection of his proposal of good-fellowship with perfect good-humour, and only smiled curiously. "Ah, the good citizen!" he said. "Ah, if we had all such morals! My business with you, citizen? My business is to ask you what you would have me do with some birds that I have been caging for you."

Roland thought of Isabel. "What," he said, "were they for flying out of Paris?"

"On the contrary, citizen," said the chief of police. "The —— were for staying in



the city after they had been ordered out of it."

"Ah," said the other, "I understand. You have arrested more refractories."

"A batch of seventy. Is the order this time to be——?" Rigault imitated with the cane he carried the action of presenting and firing.

"You would prefer it so, would you?" the other asked, sitting down to write.

"*Parbleu!*" said Rigault, jocularly; and added, in a less amiable tone, "But the citizen, I see, has more taste for writing letters than for doing his duty to the Revolution." He stepped up close to the delegate of war, and looked over his shoulder as he wrote.

"Citoyen commandant du fort d'Issy.

"CITOYEN,

"Je vous envoie des réfractaires. Vous les installerez dans les fossés de votre fort. Vous les nourrirez. Vous les ferez travailler, et vous leur imposerez la discipline la plus rigoureuse.

“Veillez surtout à ce qu'il n'y ait pas d'évasion.

“Salut et fraternité,

“Le délégué à la guerre,


“ROLAND.”

Roland handed the letter unsealed to the chief of police. “Before this order is put in force,” he said, “let it be read to these refractories. Perhaps, when they understand what awaits them at Issy, they will prefer to march with the reinforcements I am sending Dombrowski.”

Rigault seemed dissatisfied. “*Au — les fossés!*” he said, surlily. “In '93, if one had allowed a choice to *réfractaires*, it would have been between the guillotine and the battlefield. Shoot the —, citizen. Our mother, the Revolution, likes her ears to be tickled with a fusillade. One of these days she will be hearing one at La Roquette.”

“Yes,” said Roland. “And which of the prisoners there do you mean to shoot?”

“*Diable!*” said Rigault, “who knows?”



Monseigneur, the Archbishop of Paris, perhaps, and his *bande noire*. *Parbleu!* Saint Pierre will think that half the Church is coming, the day that Ferré takes down from me to the citizen director of La Roquette prison the order, '*Laissez-passer au paradis tous ces drôles qui se disent les serviteurs d'un nommé Dieu.*'"

The other's eyes flashed, and he rose. "Do you know, citizen," he said, "that I have a great mind to hunt you into the street at the point of my sword."

It seemed for a moment as if Rigault would reply by drawing his, but then he laughed, and turned away. "The street, citizen," he said. "One should be often in the streets just now, to know what is going on in Paris." He turned in the doorway, and looked at Roland with a curious, jeering smile. "I bear no malice, citizen," he said. "If you will sup with me after the theatre to-night, I can introduce you to a pretty actress or two. *Diantre!* comrade, be fraternal for once, and let us have a friendly night of it at the *Trois Frères*,

while our refractories are spending theirs in the *fossés* of Issy."

"Go, citizen, go!" the man whom he addressed said, impatiently; and this time the chief of police retired.

CHAPTER XIII.


THE RED FLAG.

IN Issy, where a less cowardly commandant had replaced Méry, and Clifford continued to hold a dubious position as second in command, the young Englishman contemplated the Paris of the Commune from a distance that, if it failed to lend enchantment, hid defects. Chaotic and disordered as was the condition of the Revolution, he hoped still that there was in it material for a Republic, and that by the exertions of a hero that Republic might be reared. Unable to cheat himself into any belief that the sombre *drapeau rouge* was the flag of liberty, he yet was content to fight heartily for it as long as it continued to be the flag of Roland. It was his faith that before the


Versailles cannon could batter a breach in the walls of Paris, the new delegate of war would have forced France and the world to confess that he was of the clay of which are fashioned those riders on the storm of Revolution who have replaced the King-makers of the past.

The fairest of Mays was smiling upon France. On battle-fields that last year's rain of blood had fertilized, the green promise of harvest covered the soil from which dead faces had looked up piteously to heaven; and the beneficent goddess, kindest Ceres, moved in bounty across the land that war had desolated, hiding with vine-leaf and corn-stalk the broad track of ruin that had been left where German feet had marched on Paris. As fair of face as in the days when she was Queen of Nations, France hid the fetters that the Teuton had clasped on her wrists, and the vulture of civil war that tore her bosom, beneath a robe of green and wreaths of flowers.

It was one of the brightest days of early May, and Nature had still the freshness



spring, but was all glowing and flushed with the approach of summer; and the sky above was unclouded, and the earth all sunny and smiling. Something of the quiet of the time seemed to rest even upon Issy. The seventy guns that battered almost without a pause the heap of ruins that had been a fort were for the moment silent; and sheltered in casemates or scattered about the roofless barracks, the garrison disposed as each man's tastes inclined him of the respite from the thunder of the bombardment and the roar of bursting shells. Lying apart from the rest, and sheltered beneath something that a month before had been a parapet, Clifford looked up into the shining sky above him, and wandered away into an empyrean of fancy, with music filling his ears that had been breathed half a century before by the voice of Shelley. As swiftly as the gossamer wings of a dream could carry him, he passed from France to Italy, and stood with the poet of the "Prometheus," a mourner at the grave of Adonais—



“Woe is me!

Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators?”

The words forced themselves from him almost in a groan as he lay there, looking into the infinite azure above him, and remembering that into that mighty vault there was accustomed to soar, not the song of the skylark, but the shriek of shells.

“Of what scene the actors or spectators.” The question seemed to whisper itself to him as if some demon had been by to put it. Forgetful of the danger that the riflemen in the Versailles trenches would welcome him as a mark, he rose to seek for himself a spot from which to look on Paris. Near and stately shone upon him the beautiful city—as glorious as Nature and Man could make it, a pageant of architecture that glowed and sparkled in the summer sun. “As fair,” the thought rose in him, “as Gomorrah, the day before Heaven’s anger smote the Cities of the Plain.” He thought of the offerings that day by day are heaped upon the altar of


Sin in Paris, and asked himself bitterly, "Is she less foul?"

Near that angle of the fort where he was standing, but a little to the right, lay the park and château of Issy, held for the Commune by a body of National Guards; and in the earlier days of the siege covered by the now nearly silenced fire of the fort. As the young officer of insurgents leaned listlessly against a gun, and thought with a sick heart of that drama of civil war in which he and other aliens were taking part, and of which the encamped Germans were the spectators, a volley of musketry rose sharply from the park; and then, with the exulting shout of men who perceive that they have taken their enemies by surprise and anticipate an easy victory, an attacking party of Versailles troops dashed forward. Clifford started. "A trap!" he muttered; "and our men have fallen into it. Fools! that could not anticipate something of this kind on seeing the bombardment cease."

He ran to seek Arnaud, the new commandant of Issy, and when the fort had

exhausted its ability to render help by throwing a shell or two among the Versailles troops, posted himself where he could watch the progress of the struggle.

In a few minutes the Communists were routed, and fled precipitately. The regulars, he could see, gave little quarter, and screams for mercy were every moment silenced with bayonet thrusts. He looked up to the red tatters of a flag that floated over Issy. "You are as red as the blood that stains you can make you, and as far as murder can remove you from being the ensign of such a Republic as Shelley saw in vision," he broke out, addressing the sinister emblem; "but I vow to God that even if Louis Roland were not fighting for you I would prefer you to the butcherly tricolor. And these Versaillais, too, call themselves Republicans!" He turned to the park of Issy. "There is nothing changed about you but your name," he said, addressing the victors in the conflict that was being decided there; "you are still the bloodhounds of the Empire."



"Citizen," a National Guard who had approached him unheeded during his vehement soliloquy interrupted, "the citizen Arnaud asks for you."


It seemed to Clifford that a rescue was to be attempted. He hurried in search of Arnaud, and found him in the shelter indicated to him—that of one of the casemates of the fort; and with him a slightly-built young man of five or six and twenty, whose red scarf proclaimed him to be a member of the Commune.

Clifford hastily saluted both. "At your orders, citizen," he said to Arnaud. "You will order me, I hope, to take as many as can be spared of the garrison and bring off all that are left of those poor fellows in the château and park."

Arnaud turned to his companion. "You hear him," he said. "Would not one say, to listen to him, 'This is a good citizen?'"

"He is English," said the other. "When did *perfid*e Albion ever send us any but traitors?"

Clifford looked at him, and then at



Arnaud. "In England," he said, "we call it traitorous to give no help when a comrade's throat is being cut. You see National Guards bayoneted after surrender within a few hundred yards of you, and send no aid to them. Why do you hesitate? There are men enough in the fort for two-thirds at least of the garrison to be spared for a sortie."


"A sortie? Who would lead it?" said Arnaud.

"You have only to give me the order."

"But surely those fellows out there can retreat on the fort without our help?"

"The Versaillais are between them and the fort."

"The fools must die, then," replied Arnaud, "in the trap that they have got themselves into. A sortie! Yes, to be beaten back into the fort in a couple of minutes and to see the enemy enter with us. A sortie! No, no, let the Versaillais establish themselves in the château if they please; there are guns enough left serviceable yet in Issy to make the position much too hot for them."



“*Coward!*” said the other, turning his back upon him. He strode away without attending to a cry from his superior to stop, and hurried to collect volunteers for a sortie. He would have succeeded in his object had not Arnaud presently rushed up and interfered. “No, no, citizen,” he said; “you might mistake your way and lead these brave fellows to Versailles. Here is the citizen Eudes, who will tell you that the Commune suspect you to be nothing better than a spy. If you want men for a sortie, take them from among your comrades in the *fossés*.”

“In the *fossés*? Who are in the *fossés*?” demanded his lieutenant.

“As if the citizen did not know!” Eudes said, shrugging his shoulders. “Oh, the perfidy of these English!”

“*Parbleu!*” interrupted Arnaud, “it had escaped me. He has not seen them, citizen. He was asleep in one of the casemates when his associates in the plot were brought here.”

“And you charge me, I suppose, with

plotting in my sleep. Who have been brought here?" said Clifford.

"Gendarmes—the gendarmes," replied Eudes, "that the traitor Roland had disguised as refractory citizens, and who were to seize on the fort and deliver it over to the Versaillais."


"Luckily," said Arnaud, "the citizen Raoul Rigault saw well what they were, and caused the Commune to be warned."

"And the Commune," added Eudes, "have ordered me to prevent this treason. You are under arrest, citizen. It is the opinion of the citizen Arnaud——"

"That we should shoot him," Arnaud said for himself.

"No," said Eudes, "the Commune must decide as to that. You will return with me, citizen, to the Hôtel de Ville."

Many of the garrison had been listeners to this colloquy. In Paris in the spring of 1871, the fatal word *treason* was what the red flag of the Commune might have been to the traditional bull if waved before it, and roused to instant and headlong fury




men whose passions were already stirred, and their brains fevered by drink and the constant roaring of the Versailles cannon. A sinister murmur arose at Eudes' last words. Arnaud heard it, and seized the moment. "*A bas l'Anglais!*" he cried, furiously. "As he came to Issy to plot, let him find the fate of a traitor in Issy." A cry, beginning none could have well said where, answered him, and passing from lip to lip, swelled in an instant into vehemence; those insurgents even who had been best affected to their English officer and had responded most readily to his call for volunteers joining in it. "*À pied le traître! À mort—à mort!*"

"Shoot him in the ditch of the fort," cried Arnaud, loudly. "Shoot him, and the other brigands with him."

Eudes' humour, fortunately, was a degree less bloodthirsty. "Patience, citizens," he said. "If he is guilty, the Commune will know how to deal with him."

"If he is guilty," Arnaud said, derisively.

"Yes, he is guilty—I do not doubt it,"



said his more placable associate; "but the justice of the Revolution demands that he be judged. Patience, citizens!" he continued, observing that of the National Guards around him many were beginning to handle their muskets threateningly; "this man must be judged."

The federals hesitated, looking at each other in silence a moment; and then, as before, a sinister murmur ran from lip to lip. "*La vengeance—il nous faut une vengeance,*" was their answer.

"Are they judging us out there?" one man cried, pointing in the direction of the park of Issy, from which there still came the death-screams of bayoneted wretches, and at intervals the ring of chassepots. "If we are to receive death only and not to give it, I will fight no longer. I will break my musket. *La mort—la mort!*"

"Yes, yes," chorused his comrades, "*la mort—la mort!*"

The young captain of National Guards looked round him, and saw on all sides only the gleam of gun-barrels, and the still more

threatening light in wolfish eyes. "Before you murder me," he said, "will you at least tell me what it is that you accuse me of?"

"You are suspected," Eudes replied, "of having plotted to betray the fort into the hands of the Versaillais."


"Betray! This heap of ruin! In a week or less they will have it from us whether we give it to them or not. It is all but untenable, as it is."

"There is a difference, it seems to me," said Arnaud. "When we retire from the fort, we will spike the cannon and take our lives with us; but it was your plan to betray both the guns of the fort and the lives of its defenders to the Versaillais."

"And who says of me that I would have done this?"

"The citizen Rigault."

"Raoul Rigault! What does he know of me that he should speak of me? It is those who have been with me in Issy for a month past that should know me, and can say of me if I have spared to risk my life,




or have ever spoken of surrender. Speak, citizens," he continued to the garrison, "have I acted in a way that should make you say of me, 'He is a traitor?'"

The federals looked at him, and then at each other, as if uncertain of their answer. At this moment of hesitation a sergeant of their number came running up hastily from another part of the fort and threw himself between his comrades and his officer. "You will shoot him!" he exclaimed, tearing open his uniform at the breast. "Fire at him through my heart, then!"

"Has the fool taken leave of his senses?" cried Arnaud. "Do you know what you are saying, citizen Guilletat?"

"And you, citizen commandant, do you know that but for this brave Englishman, I would have taken leave of my brother? You saw him, citizens," the sergeant exclaimed, turning to his comrades, among whom he was a man of extraordinary influence. "It was when we attacked the Versailles brigands in their trenches, and came so near dislodging them, that my brother was



hit as we were retreating, and fell; and the citizen took him up and carried him under fire to the fort. This a traitor! Well, then, I am a traitor too,—I, Laurent Guilletat.”

A National Guard stepped out from the rest and saluted. “It is enough, citizen,” he said. “The citizen Guilletat vouches for you. Your pardon, *mon officier*.”

“Yes, yes,” others said, thronging forward. “*Pardon! pardon!*”

Arnaud in vain exerted himself to re-excite suspicion. “Fools!” he said, “he would have betrayed you. It was but the other moment that he was seeking to lead you into an ambuscade of the Versaillais.”


Clifford saw that the moment was favourable for a decisive stroke. “Those who are not afraid of my leading them into any ambuscade,” he said, “step forward.” There was a simultaneous movement. “Well, then, let us go.”

At the head of a larger number of volunteers than had at first responded, he hastened out of Issy; and his party were

presently hotly engaged with the Versaillais. In their savage pursuit of the insurgents, whom they had surprised and routed in the park, the regulars were scattered in a disorder little inferior to that of the defeated federals, and gave way in confusion before the attack now made upon them. A body of National Guards, who still held out in the château of Issy, were relieved; and Clifford's command had nearly doubled in numbers, and were jubilant over the complete success of their sally, and the contrast between the slightness of their own loss and the severity of that inflicted on the enemy, when he triumphantly re-entered the fort. He re-entered it elated. Vague hopes of other such successes stirred in him; and there seemed to rise dazzling before him, and to stream across the horizon of the future, the meteor, Glory.

There was a firing party drawn up in the courtyard. "What!" he said to Arnaud, "is there still, then, some one left for you to shoot?"

"We are going to clear the *fossés* of some




rubbish," the other answered, enigmatically. At that moment, several prisoners in civilian dress, and whose hands were tied, were dragged forward by a party of the insurgents who had remained in the fort. "How?" said Clifford, interfering, "it is, then, murder that you have in prospect."

Arnaud waved his hand in the direction of the park. "When you can bring back our dead to life that are lying out there," he said, "it will be time enough to forbid us to take vengeance on their assassins."

"Their assassins!—These," said Clifford, looking at them, "are not Versailles troops. Why do you talk of taking vengeance on them? Who are they, and what has brought them here?"

"The citizen delegate of police says that they are disguised gendarmes, and the citizen delegate of war that they are refractory citizens who have refused to march. If they have conspired with the Versaillais against us, they deserve death; if they refuse to march with us against the Versaillais, they deserve death. *Vive la Com-*



mune!” Arnaud answered, speaking as if appealing to the garrison of the fort, and with the air of one who felt that the arguments he used were irrefutable.

Clifford looked from him to the faces around. There seemed to be in most of them an impatience for the work of murder. He turned to the party that he had himself commanded. “You, at least,” he said, “will not consent that our cause shall be dishonoured by the murder of a few helpless prisoners?”

Guillettat, to whom he had more particularly addressed himself, seemed to hesitate an instant, and then turned sullenly away. “They are spies of the Versaillais,” he muttered. “Let the Versaillais protect them.”

Arnaud saw that the mood of the moment was inflammable, and hastened to apply the spark that should enkindle it. “Citizens,” he cried, straining to the uttermost his naturally powerful voice, “the corpses of your brothers are lying in the park of Issy as if they were fallen leaves; some where they

fell in fighting, but more of them where they were butchered after surrender by the Versailles. We are merciful; we take in return only the life of every tenth man of the seventy Versailles that are in the ditches of our fort. Here are those seven Versailles. Take them, and do by them as their friends have done by yours."

There was a rush towards the prisoners. Clifford put himself between them and the garrison. "Will you let this wretch make devils of you?" he said. "For God's sake, be men!"

"Drag him away," said Arnaud; "is he to hinder us from our revenge?"

Hands were laid on the young Englishman, and shaken off by him with an effort that brought him close to the doomed seven for whose lives he had been pleading. As, revolver in hand, he faced round to menace those who were pressing on him, he felt a light touch on the arm, and then a voice, calm even in that extremity of danger, addressed him by his name.

Clifford started violently, and turned.

"*You!*" he said, in the voice of one who asks himself whether he be speaking in a dream, "you, in Issy, and—and——"

"Are you an officer among these wretches?" said the girl. "You can tell them, then, that I am the cousin of their own Minister of War. I don't suppose it is of much consequence, as far as taking or sparing my life is concerned, to add that I am also a woman."

As she spoke, Clifford had recovered himself from his stupor of astonishment. "Guilletat!—Renaud!" he cried. The two men for whom he shouted hurried to him. "This is one of the nearest relations of the citizen delegate of war. Help me to save her life," he said.

"*Her* life!" said Guilletat, looking at the prisoner in surprise.

The girl's cheek reddened, and she looked away. Clifford bit his lip, and felt for a moment angry with himself. "Yet it must have been told to save her life," he muttered. "Yes," he said, "it is a woman—Is she to be murdered with the rest?"



“If she were Thiers’ daughter she should not die,” answered Guilletat.

“She is not a *Versaillaise*,—she is the near relation of citizen Roland, who will thank you for what you do for her. Call up some of your comrades.”

Guilletat made a peculiar sign, and fifty men sprang forward. In an instant the girl and those who had lately been her companions were as many feet apart. She looked sadly back at them, however, and then entreatingly at Clifford. “As you are a man,” she said, with an emotion that her own danger had not stirred in her, “try to save the lives of these poor creatures.”

At the same moment, Arnaud, who had at first watched in silent astonishment proceedings that threatened to deprive him of one of his victims, rushed forward to interfere. “At whose order do you dare to meddle with the prisoners, citizen Guilletat? Put that brigand back among the others,” he commanded.

“This brigand, citizen?” said Guilletat.

"This brigand, as you call her, is a woman, and one who is not even a *Versaillaise*, but related to the citizen delegate of war."


Arnaud approached, and stared insolently at her. "Ah, *parbleu!* through Adam, I see," he said, coarsely. "But we will leave the citizen Roland his mistress." He turned from her to the other prisoners. "These, at least, are not of the tribe of the Rolands. Quick, and finish with them," he commanded.

His last words diverted Clifford's attention from the insult that he had been on the point of resenting. "Arnaud," he said, "listen to me. It is not the Commune that you will answer to for this murder, it is the delegate of war. By Heaven, if you dare to take these lives you shall answer for them with your own!" He threatened the commandant with his revolver. "Murderer, will you listen to me!"

Arnaud ducked down among his men. "Is he mad?" he said. "Take that weapon from him."

The command was so far attended to that some of the federals seized Clifford and held him fast, while others hastily completed the preparations for the murder that was intended. The firing party that had been told off came to the front, and the victims were pushed with the barrels of guns to the positions selected for the slaughter. When all was ready, and there had sunk down on Issy a silence that was as a shadow, and cast by Death, Arnaud, whistling a light air, stepped forward.

"We have not a band in the fort, *mes amis*," he said to the men who were about to die; "and one misses it at a moment like this, for the custom in the French army has always been to do these things gaily. *Parbleu!* I remember, when little Tridet of the 47th Regiment was shot last year, the air that was played in marching past the dead body was one of the prettiest things we have had from Offenbach." He whistled some part of it while his men were taking aim, and then quickly unsheathing his sword, and with a gesture that made it




flash above his head in the sunlight, "*Feu, donc!*" he cried. "*Au diable les——!*"

Thirty chassepots rang out as one. A slight clash followed as the firing party grounded arms, and then for perhaps a minute there was silence again, broken only by groans from one or two bodies in which life still quivered. At a sign from Arnaud, a sergeant of the insurgents stepped up to where these were lying and lodged a bullet from his revolver in the brain of each.

As the volley rang out, those with whom the young Englishman had been struggling loosed their hold of him. He looked for a moment at the smoke that hung like a pall around the bodies of the murdered, and then to the cloudless sky above him. "Is there a God?" that look seemed to ask, "or was it hell that sent forth man?"

The girl beside him had sunk down, shuddering. He drew his sword, and cut with it the cords that her hands were tied with, and then breaking the weapon across his knee, flung the pieces from him. Deep down in his heart, and beneath the rage and



horror that filled it, there was a feeling of strange relief at taking leave of the Commune.

"Come with me. This is no place for you, this slaughter-house," he said, giving her his hand to raise her. "You shall soon be out of Issy."

Eudes, who had approached them and was staring curiously at the disguised girl, heard the words. "That is true, citizen," he said, "but it will not be you that will take charge of her movements when she leaves here."

"And who will, then?" said the other.

"The citizen Rigault, *parbleu!* This *citoyenne* who, as one sees, is not absolutely well disposed towards *sansculottisme*, is suspected to be still more an enemy to the Revolution. She was sent here by the citizen delegate of police, under an order from the citizen delegate of war."

"You lie," said Clifford, "or you have taken leave of your senses. Roland send her here! She is his cousin."

Eudes appealed from him to the girl her-

self. "Is it not true, *citoyenne*?" he asked. "Was it not from the citizen Roland that Raoul Rigault obtained the order to send the whole seventy of you to Fort Issy?"


"Speak, Miss Cameron," said Clifford, at the same instant. "What is this he is telling me?"

"It is the truth," she answered.

"The truth! — that Louis sent you here?"

"That Louis sent me here. He certainly did not dream of sending me here, but it is quite true that he has done so. It would seem that the ruffian who seized me as I was leaving Paris is your Communist chief of police, and that the delegate of war had given him orders to send to Fort Issy a number of refractory Parisians who refused to serve in the National Guard, and to have them imprisoned in the *fossés*. I was brought here with the rest."

"Imprison! — Louis Roland imprison any one in the Issy *fossés*!" said Clifford, whose residence in the bombarded fort had given



him a vivid idea of the horrors of such a position—"Impossible!"

"And why impossible?" she asked.

"It is not like him; it is too inhuman."

Isabel turned, and pointed to where Arnaud and those who had acted under his orders were hanging like vultures over the bodies of the dead. "Where was his humanity," she said, "when he put himself at the head of wretches like these? I tell you I myself saw the order in his handwriting that had all but included me in this butchery. The Commune is fond, I hear, of offering these sacrifices on the altar of Liberty." For an instant her haughty face wore in its disdain the expression of a Thalestris incensed; then a softer light came into the proud eyes, and she offered him her hand. "I have not thanked you yet for my life," she said. "But it is a vile cause that you have been fighting for, believe me."

Clifford had but just time to press the fair fingers warmly, when he was seized upon by Eudes. "How often, citizen,"

said the member of the Commune, impatiently, "am I to ask you why, if this woman is related to the delegate of war, he sends her to Fort Issy?"


"Take another tone in speaking of her," said Clifford, "and I may reply to you. Has the Commune appointed you to interrogate her and me?"

"*Parbleu!*" replied Eudes; "and to invite you to accompany me to the Hôtel de Ville."

"And if I am unwilling? And if these brave fellows that I led out of the fort just now, and the others that we relieved in the château of Issy, have a word to say in the matter?"

Eudes touched the red scarf that he wore. "Behind him who wears this," he said, "there is the Commune. I will return to my colleagues, and communicate to them your defiance of their authority."

As he spoke, the other had reflected how cruelly perilous the position of the girl beside him would be in Issy. Her life there might be means of defending; but—



"It will not be necessary," he said, "I will accompany you."


"And this citizen who is a *citoyenne*?" asked Eudes.

"It is on condition that she goes with us that I consent to follow you. It is not Roland who has sent her here, but the delegate of police."

He told the story, to which Eudes listened with evident incredulity. The other then conversed apart with Arnaud for a few minutes; and presently returning, "You say, *citoyenne*," he inquired, "that you had a pass signed by Delescluze, Varlin, and Gérardin, and countersigned by the delegate of war; and that it was taken from you by Raoul Rigault?"

The girl, too haughty to reply in words, answered him by an inclination of the head.


Eudes shrugged his shoulders with the air of a man profoundly sceptical of what he hears. "Steal your passport! If he had tried to steal your company for a week, *ma belle*, it would have been more like the



Raoul I know of," he replied. "We will see what citizen Rigault himself has to say to such an accusation."

Clifford suppressed the sentiments that such a declaration excited in him. It was his aim before all things to get his companion safely out of Issy. He took leave, accordingly, with cordiality on both sides, of Guilletat and the other volunteers who had shared in the sally that he had commanded; and with the escort that had attended Eudes on his coming to Issy acting as their guard, Isabel and he departed in the company of the young deputy to attempt reaching Paris. Fort Issy was now so nearly invested as to render it a journey of considerable risk from its ramparts to the *enceinte*. The bloodstained ruins of the fort were, however, exchanged in safety for the streets of the capital; and Clifford presently halted, and made his companion do the same.

Eudes, who immediately that Paris was reached had got on horseback, now came galloping up. "*En avant*, citizen!" he



said, impatiently. "Must I order a National Guard or two to hurry you forward at the point of the bayonet?"

The other, without replying, seized with one hand the bridle of Eudes' horse, and with the other drew his revolver. "Order your men," he said, "to take the direction of the Ministry of War."

Eudes trembled, and put up his hand as if to ward off the expected bullet, but said nothing.

"Understand me," said Clifford, "it is only for my companion that I ask this; for myself, I give you my parole that as soon as she is at the Ministry of War, I will go on with you quietly to the Hôtel de Ville."


Eudes plainly listened to the proposal with distrust. "The Ministry of War!" he said, now finding speech. "And the *citoyenne* would warn Colonel Roland that his plot for betraying Fort Issy to the Versailles brigands is discovered. No, citizen, your companion goes with me to the Prefecture of Police, and you to the Hôtel de Ville."

"I warn you, citizen Eudes," said Clifford, "that, rather than you shall take this young countrywoman of mine away from me, and put her again in the power of a ruffian like Rigault, I will blow your brains out."

The escort, surprised by what was happening, and unable to fire without danger to their leader, had as yet made no attempt to interfere. Eudes now saw, however, a National Guard detach himself from the rest, and steal softly behind Clifford, with his chassepot uplifted and reversed. "Take care of your own, citizen," he answered. Before the other could turn, the butt-end of the weapon struck him with merciless force upon the head, and he lay senseless in the street.

"Is he dead?" Eudes said, springing from the saddle. A hasty inspection showed the contrary. "Take him to an hospital, then. If he recovers, the Commune will have a word or two to say to him," said the young member of that body.

"*Citoyenne*," he resumed, addressing




Isabel, to whom a compassionate insurgent had handed his brandy-flask ; and who was kneeling, and bathing with its contents the forehead of her senseless protector ; “ it is with reluctance that I interfere with one who performs so well the work of a Sister of Mercy ; but in a revolution time is precious, and it is absolutely my duty to bring you as quickly as possible to the Prefecture of Police, where we shall doubtless find the citizen Rigault.”

CHAPTER XIV.


A SEASCAPE.

FOR near a week the graceful little yacht, *Enchantress*, had been lying in Dartmouth Harbour, her white wings folded like those of a sleeping sea-bird. She had stolen in as a dream in the twilight; and lay day after day as silent as motionless, a very bark of Morpheus, the listless crew of which seemed to lounge from daybreak to sunset with half-opened eyes; and as soon as night was come again to lie down and sleep. Twice or thrice, when the May morning was more than commonly bright and tempting, eyes that were watching the schooner saw a boat lowered from her, into which there descended a charming girlish figure of eighteen, handed down by a



cavalier not very many years her senior. This couple, whom such Dartmouth folk as were curious about them took to be a bride and bridegroom that fondness for the sea had tempted to pass their honeymoon in a yacht, would presently be rowed by two of the crew of their vessel away from the town, and pass the day lotos-eating amongst the dreamlike loveliness of scenery provided by Nature for such of her worshippers as choice or good-fortune leads to float with oar or sail upon the tranquil bosom of that fairest of rivers, the Dart.

In an ancient garden, planted by the Maker of Man, and known as Paradise, the first, and also the most mischievous of womankind, found, says chronicle, her wedded hours hang heavy on her hands, and listened for diversion to the tempting whispers of a serpent. Was the sunlight of heaven still as bright to Eve the day after the plucking of an apple had banished that of innocence from her eyes and heart? Here, in this English Eden of Devon, was a daughter of hers out of whose life the



light of innocence had also faded, and whose languid eyes took as little delight in gazing on the prospect before them as though, for wood and hill, they had looked at wall and house-top; and, for a loiterer on the watery highway of the Dart, the girl herself had been a busy unit in a London street.

“ See, Pearlie, what a lovely sunset ! ”

“ I’m tired of sunsets,” she said, pettishly.

“ I wish we were away from here.”

The boat in which they were returning from an afternoon’s fishing excursion touched the yacht as she spoke, and for the moment her companion seemed scarcely to have noticed her words. It was not until an hour and more afterwards, and when the sunset had passed into as lovely a moonrise, that he suddenly flung into the water the cigar he was smoking, and walked aft to where a bracelet gleamed and a light summer dress was seen fluttering in the stern. “ Why, Pearlie,” he said, passing an arm round the girl’s waist, and lifting her down from her not very safe

position, "to see you perched up there one might fancy that you were the figurehead of the craft. What!" as Margaret tried in vain to hide her tears, "crying again! And what the deuce may be the matter now?"

The girl turned suddenly to him, and clasping his arm with both her hands, looked up, sobbing, into his face. "Oh, if you would but marry me! Oh, for God's sake, marry me!" she said.

"Make a partner for life of you, Pearlie!" he answered. "My infatuation won't reach to such a pitch as that."

"Make me what I was before I knew you. No, you can't do that; but you could make me fit, at least, to go back to Wastdale and ask my grandfather to forgive me. You know he has never taken any notice of the letter that I wrote him." She let her head sink on his shoulder, and clung to him, crying bitterly. "Oh, if you would but make me your wife!" she said. "Oh, my God, how I would love you!"

Libertine and selfish, heartless cynic as

he was; and though the hysterical fits of remorse with which his victim had of late been frequently convulsed, had begun to weary him of her, the man could not altogether see without its touching him the passionate distress of a creature so lovely. "Pearlie!" he said, in a softened voice, and letting his hand play caressingly with her hair. "My poor little darling!"

"Marry me," she repeated. "Oh, for pity's sake, marry me!"

"I can't—I can't," he repeated.

"But what is to become of me, then, if—if you——" She broke away from the embrace with which he sought to restrain her, and looked him in the face with tear-wet eyes. "Will you leave me if you should grow tired of me? Perhaps you are beginning to tire of me already? Yes! I can see in his eyes that he does not care for me as at first. Oh, my God, and the lies that this man has sworn!"

"Don't try my temper too much," he said. "Lies, do you say? I don't remember any."

“What! You have forgotten what you promised me?”

“I never promised that I would marry you.”

“But you swore that you would never leave me, did you not? You have promised me a hundred—a thousand—times that you would love me and keep to me all your life. Did you not pledge me your honour that you would be faithful to me? His *honour*—oh, my God! And now—not a twelvemonth since you—— Oh! cruel, cruel!” She sank down, hiding her face, and weeping passionately.

“Don’t make such a little fool of yourself,” he said, lifting her. “Why do you take it into that pretty head that I want to leave you?”

“Because—because—— Oh; if you knew how cold you have seemed to me of late!”


“Cold! Why, how the deuce is a fellow to be anything but cold, when, every time he looks at those pretty eyes, he sees tears in ’em. You’ll cry them out of your head,

I think ; or, at any rate, cry all the beauty out of them. What were you fretting about just now, may I ask ? ”

“ Shall I tell him ? ” she said, speaking to herself. “ Yes, I will ; he shall judge whether I have reason to fret or not. This is the twelfth of May ; and it was on the twelfth of May that my mother died. I was thinking how happy she must feel, if she can look down out of heaven and see what you have made me.”

“ And why the deuce should you think of such things at all ? And why shouldn’t the old lady be happy, if she’s in such comfortable quarters as you think she is ? I suppose, Pearlie, it was your grandfather that brought you up in the fear of ghosts. You’re like nineteen out of every twenty of your sex—cursedly superstitious.”

“ Superstitious ! ” said the girl. “ It would have been as well for me if I had had more of what you call superstition ; I might have been less wicked in this world if I had been more afraid of the next. *You* are not afraid of it, are you ? You don’t




put any faith in what my grandfather used to tell me ; that the worm that never dies is memory, and that every sin we commit is part of the sting it will have in eternity ? ”

“ I believe, Pearlie, that when we’re dead, we’re dead.” He drew her face to his and kissed her. “ While we have life, then, let us make the most of it.”

She snatched herself quickly away from him, looking at him with a strange light in her great blue eyes. “ Do you know what was in my mind when you lifted me down on deck just now ? ” she said. “ I was thinking that I should very much like to die, if I could be sure that death really was sleep. You remember that Devonshire rhyme you repeated to me the other day—

‘ River of Dart, oh ! River of Dart,
Every year thou claimest a heart.’

When I thought how my mother would suffer if she could see my wickedness ; and that my grandfather hates me, and my brothers hate me, it seemed as if there was a voice saying to me, ‘ Why should not the heart this year be yours ? Down under



the cool water there, neither the headache nor the heartache would ever torment you any more.'"


Her companion listened to her with astonishment. "The deuce, Pearlie!" he said, "you might well say that you wanted to leave Devonshire. It's time I had you away from here, indeed. Suppose we sail in the morning for Ryde or Ventnor? It's what I had it in my mind to propose to you just now, when you drove it out of it with all that confounded outcry about marriage."

"Are we to cruise about much longer?" she asked, listlessly. "I wish you would take me to Paris, as you once promised."

"Take you to Paris? Confound it, there's the Commune in Paris."

"It was of the Commune I was thinking. Why couldn't we see something of the siege? It would be exciting."

"Yes, excitement is all that women think of now-a-days. Well, Pearlie, I'll find you excitement if you are so anxious for it; but it won't be the excitement of seeing bullets




fly. What do you say to going on the stage?"

"Say!" She sprang away from him and stood there wild-eyed in the moonlight, her small hands pressed to her throbbing bosom. "Don't speak of the stage to me to-night," she said. "Don't, unless you want to see me go overboard before your eyes."


"I should fish you out again," he said, lightly; "I'm a first-rate swimmer, you know. Take a dip, then, Pearlle, if you think it would cool your temper."

She darted to the side as he spoke; and had he not been instant in following, would have made the plunge that she had threatened. "No, no, Pearlle," he said, struggling with her; "I was only joking, believe me. Come below;—I won't say another word to-night to vex you; and you'll find that a glass or two more of champagne than you generally take at supper will clear these hysterical fancies out of your little head much more pleasantly than cold water would. Come below; I



can't spare you to the kingdom of the mermaids yet."

A fairer morning never shone on Devonshire than that on which the white wings of the schooner "Enchantress" were spread to a light west wind, and she sped away from Dartmouth. Across the hill-locked breadth of water that serves as harbour, through the narrower entrance, and past the time-worn castles that in Queen Bess's day may have availed to guard it, she raced as swiftly and gracefully as any yacht that ever sailed these waters. Margaret sat for half the morning, her chin resting on her hand, and her deep, dreamy blue eyes looking now at the cloudless heaven above her, and now at the blue waters of the Channel. She saw neither Torquay sitting stately on her hills, nor the miniature Bay of Naples that lies in such beauty at their feet; nor the fairy coves upon whose pebbled beach and in whose limpid waters, mermaids, if mermaids haunted Devon, would nightly sport; nor the sentinel rocks that rise red and frowning between sea and hill; nor



wooded peak melting softly into peak, and fading in the haze of the distance as fades a dream. Out of that shining sea, the azure of which was of scarcely less lovely a tint than her own blue eyes, faces as of drowned women seemed to look at her; and the murmur and surge of the waves about the bows of the vessel became a voice, and sounded as if the sea were singing to her,—

“River of Dart, oh! River of Dart,
Every year thou claimest a heart.”

At last she could bear it no longer, and started with a shiver to her feet. “What is it?” her companion said, looking up from the cushions on which he was idling away the morning over a newspaper and his cigar case. “What the deuce is the matter with you? You look as if you had seen a ghost.”

“The sea was making me feel ill,” she answered.

“Ill!—you!—on a morning like this; and you one of the best sailors that ever went to sea in a petticoat.”

“I don’t mean that I felt sick,” said the girl. She stood for a moment hesitating;

and then went forward a step or two ; and bent over the smoker as he lounged among his cushions. " Oh," she said, with a shudder, " the horrid things the sea was saying to me ! Would it put them out of my head, do you think, if I were to do as you said last night—to go upon the stage ? "


CHAPTER XV.

ROUGE PERD.

“LE drapeau tricolore flotte sur Issy.”

Roland laid down the pen with which he had just written the words, and, without speaking, handed the paper on which they were traced to his chief of the staff. Séguier read the curt despatch, twisted the paper between his fingers for a moment, and finally ventured on a remonstrance. “*Mon colonel*,” he said, “this bulletin will drive the Commune to fury. ‘*Le drapeau tricolore flotte sur Issy.*’ One would say that it was the announcement of a victory.”

“How many copies are there usually struck off of the daily bulletin?” the delegate of war inquired.




"About six thousand, I think."

"Let them print ten of this. It is to be printed exactly as it stands. No, Séguier—no remonstrances. Every day since I was weak enough to resign the issue of the bulletins to the Commune, they have surfeited the Parisians with falsehoods. Let us see with what appetite they will break-fast this once upon the truth."

When his chief of the staff had left him, Colonel Roland stood for a few minutes lost in his gloomy thoughts; and then put on his képi, and passed after Séguier into the street. "I shall soon cross this threshold for the last time," he muttered to himself, as he stepped across that of the Ministry of War. He walked on in the bright morning sunshine, his step heavy, and a murmur now and then escaping him, "Lost!—yes, yes, lost."

As he was passing opposite a wine-shop crowded with National Guards, both officers and men, the noise that came from it drew his attention; and he crossed the roadway, and looked in. He laughed as he walked on




again ; the sight of such troops had amused him. “ *Dame !* ” he said to himself ; “ one may see that this is a war of the beggars, and that Paris is defended by her *gueusaille* ; for these fellows manage to make even the uniform one has thrust them into look as if it were a beggar’s rags.”

He laughed again, and furiously, as he thought of his officers. “ *Ces gueux !* ” he said, “ tippling at wineshop counters with their own sergeants, the sabre between the legs, their persons and dresses filthy, their eyes and their words stupid with wine, the scoundrels pretend to be in arms to deliver the country from the rule of the sabre, and the only rule they could substitute for it would be that of *delirium tremens*. It is just as it was in the time of Vincent ; or, if there is a difference, it is that they see the end is near now, and drink the more. They will die fighting only if they are neither too drunk to make a stand, nor sober enough to run away. And it was out of these dregs of humanity that I had promised myself to shape an army to crush Versailles and lead

afterwards against the Prussians ! Oh, fool —blind fool ! ”

He walked on slowly through street after street, thinking of the progress that had been made by the besiegers in his ten days of power. The Bois de Boulogne was occupied by the enemy, the garrison of Vanves were scarcely to be restrained from evacuating that fort, and now—— ? “ *Le drapeau tricolore flotte sur Issy.* ” “ And since it is there,” he thought, “ it must sooner or later float in Paris. That Arnaud ! If he had held out but two days longer I would have struck a blow, in spite of the chiefs of legions. And Clifford ? Is he dead, that he failed to warn me of Arnaud’s intention to evacuate ? I begin to think that I am doomed to bring ruin on myself and all that is dear to me. At least, Isabel should be safe at Château Roland by this time. And what would she find waiting for her in the old home ? Not death !—oh, my God ! not death ! If that Englishwoman would but return ! ”

This wish, and the fear out of which it



had sprung, continued to follow him wherever he went that morning, and were still with him when shortly after mid-day he presented himself at the Hôtel de Ville, and found a stormy sitting of the Commune in progress. He was received with fury by the assembled chiefs of the insurrection. "Ah!" cried Pyat, as he entered, "at last the traitor presents himself."

The reproaches hurled at him were unanimous; even Delescluze joined in them. "Either you are unequal to the task entrusted to you," he said, "or a traitor to it. How will you keep the enemy out of Paris now that they are in Issy?"

"And the words in which he publishes his crime!" cried Pyat. "'*Le drapeau tricolore flotte sur Issy.*' A bulletin like that sweats treason."

It was occasionally the pleasure of Raoul Rigault to absent himself from the Prefecture of Police and assert the right that his election by the eighth *arrondissement* had given him to share in the debates of the Commune. When seated, he generally

maintained an air of drunken gravity that, once on his feet, was exchanged for oaths and fury. He rose now, as if Pyat's words had been a call to him, and mixing up the terms of reproach more ordinarily employed in the Commune with others, the foulest in his vocabulary, "Spy !—brigand !" he cried to Roland, "does the tricolor flag float over Issy? Well, then, we will pull it down again, and the blood of the traitor who caused it to be placed there shall dye it of the same colour as our own. Give me the word, citizens, and I arrest him."

"No," said Vermorel, president of the sitting, "no bloodshed. Relieve the traitor of his functions and let him go to seek the punishment of his treason elsewhere."

Rigault said something in answer, but what he replied was inaudible in the outcry now becoming general, all but two or three members of the Assembly rising at once, and each deaf to any but his own claim to speak. Vermorel rang his bell repeatedly and furiously, and failing to obtain silence, at last cast it from him with a gesture of

despair and sat down. Others of the insurgent deputies began presently to imitate his example, and after nearly an hour of indescribable fury and tumult the Commune at last gasped itself into what, in contrast with the previous uproar, might be termed silence. He who had caused all this tumult took advantage of the throat of the assembly being thus hoarse to possess himself for a moment of its ear. "Do we live, then, under a government of police?" he said; "and is the Prefect Rigault its chief? In that case I have nothing to demand from you but a cell in Mazas."


"Let him have it," said Pyat; "yes, send him there at once, the traitor. Release Vincent, whom it appears to me we may have wronged, and put this little serpent in his place."

The proposition was fiercely debated without a decision being arrived at. Delescluze spoke against it, but in the same breath took occasion to reproach Roland sharply for the issue of the bulletin with which the city had that morning been pla-

carded. "You go out of your way to announce the loss of Issy," he said, "and you publish the news so that one would say it was the declaration of a victory. It is not an error only that you have committed, it is a crime."

"To the traitor who sold the fort," said Pyat, "it is good news that the garrison have abandoned it, and the enemy have entered. It is so good that, instead of the ordinary six thousand copies of the bulletin of the day, he gave orders this morning to the printer for ten. I warned you ten days ago, citizens, that this young pupil of Bazaine had agreed with the Versaillais to sell them Forts Issy and Vanves, at the price of half a million of francs for each fort; and now one half of the treachery is completed."

Roland smiled slightly. "It is with pleasure," he said, in a voice perfectly without emotion, "that I reflect, that from the day when I offered the Revolution my services, I have had citizen Delescluze for my friend, and citizen Pyat for my enemy."



To be trusted by the one, and slandered by the other, is all that is needed to prove my honour untarnished. And if I now ask the Commune to accept my resignation, it is not because of the slanders of citizen Pyat, but because I have become weary of the mockery of commanding where every one deliberates and none obey."

"And this you say after being for ten days Minister of War. The Revolution has used you up even more quickly than Vincent, it seems," said Delescluze.

"It is fatiguing," replied Roland, "the *rôle* of corporal. I am all day running right and left, bringing back under fire battalions that are tired of fighting."

"You promised to make citizens Sabre and Cannon your corporals," cried Pyat. "You threatened that the one should cut down fugitives, and the other open fire on them."

"There are threats," answered Roland, "that remain such because the means and not the will are wanting to carry them out."

"And the twenty thousand men with whom you were to give battle outside Paris?" Delescluze demanded.

"There are five reasons, in the shape of the five members of the war commission, why I have found it impossible to collect them; sixty or seventy more on the benches of the Commune; and twenty beyond all that in the twenty chiefs of legions."

"*Diantre!*" said Pyat; "here are enough of reasons. He will persuade us soon that we are all traitors, and he the only good citizen in Paris."

"What does he say of the Commune?" asked Meillet. "Does he accuse us, then?"

"He gives us reasons for troops," said another insurgent. "It is not at all the same thing, it seems to me."

"Let him tell us why, in the ten days that he has been delegate of war, he has done so little."

"I will tell you in a word," said Roland; "it is because of you and your feebleness."

You saw me attempting to draw order from chaos, and materials for an army from a drunken and mutinous mob ; and you said to each other that as soon as I had that army I would make use of it to get myself proclaimed dictator. When the chiefs of legions protested against the new organization that I had designed to introduce, there were only Delescluze and Gérardin among you who did not lend their support to that protest. Perhaps I should have replied by shooting the chiefs of legions ; but I shrank from assuming alone the responsibility for a severity so odious. Keep your chiefs of legions, then, and give me a cell in Mazas. They have served you well ; they have prevented me from bringing together the twenty thousand men that I demanded, until it is too late and Fort Issy has fallen into the hands of the enemy. You will not have organization ? Well, then, go on for the few days that are yet left to you, surrounding yourselves with ruins."

"And if, for a cell in Mazas, we gave


you," said Delescluze, "an absolute freedom of action, would it yet be possible to bring troops together, and retake the fort?"

"Perhaps," said Roland.


"Retake it, then," said the other; "and as soon as the news reaches me that the *drapeau rouge* has replaced the tricolor, I will rise in my place here, and propose to the Commune that you shall be appointed military dictator while the siege lasts."

Not all the vast influence of the old Jacobin could render his declaration acceptable to his colleagues. Pyat, in particular, protested violently that the National Guard, both troops and officers, would mutiny were Roland's authority over them made absolute. "At this very moment," he said, "the chiefs of legions are about to assemble at the Ministry of War, to protest once more to the traitor who has too long been delegate against the treacherous innovations that he tells us are attempts to organize."

A strange gleam shot from Roland's eyes. Of the countless difficulties that from the




moment he replaced Vincent had entangled him as if among thorns, those connected with the officering of the National Guard had pierced the deepest and fretted most constantly. Divided into legions which claimed the privilege of electing their own officers, this raw militia was, in effect, a series of political clubs, presided over by their favourite orators under the disguises of lieutenant, captain, etc.; and as drunken and mutinous when in Paris as they were cowardly and unmanageable before the enemy. He had tried hard to make an end of the evil by forming marching regiments, that were to be barracked outside the city, and subjected to a severe discipline administered by officers appointed by himself; and the twenty chiefs of legions, enraged at the prospect of sinking from being generals of brigade back into the nothingness they had sprung from; and, if possible, still more unwilling to be marched away from haranguing and brandy drinking to fight battles, had thereon protested to the Commune. "The gods," said



dying Talbot, as his death was imagined by Schiller, "fight in vain against stupidity." A will that does not fight, but crushes on, pitiless as Fate, and, like Fate, grinding to powder whatever obstacles may rear themselves against it—the iron will of a Napoleon—may crush even stupidity. But there was but one Napoleon, and the will that I speak of died with him; and only in that of Bismarck has there been re-born any shadow of its strength. Of neither of these scourges of God and heirs of Attila was Roland the equal; and after an eight days' struggle with the stupidity of the Commune, the insurrection was dragging on exhausted with it the man who had thought to stay its hurrying rush to ruin; his plans had been utterly baffled; and chaos and the chiefs of legions reigned triumphant.

There was a slight quiver in Roland's voice as he answered Pyat. "If you are correctly informed, citizen," he said, "your news is well-timed. Before the chiefs of legions leave the Ministry of War, they



will have agreed to find me, this evening, fifteen or twenty thousand troops with whom to attempt the retaking of Issy." He turned, without another word, and left the Commune.

There was a dead silence when he was gone. "Will he succeed?" Delescluze presently said, breaking it. "If he succeed——"

"If he fail," Pyat interrupted,—“and we may be sure that he will fail,—a cell in Mazas.”

Roland had some arrangements to make at the Ministry of War that occupied him until after the chiefs of legions were all arrived. When they had been a few minutes waiting for him, he hastily mounted from the courtyard to the room where they were collected; his eyes blazing, and his lips set and white with the consciousness of the work he came prepared to do. "What brings you here?" he asked roughly of them. "You ought to be under fire,—why are you at the Ministry?"


The spokesman of the group stepped for-

ward. "We protest, citizen delegate, against——"

"You protest! Silence with your protests, and listen to me while I give my orders about Issy. I want fifteen thousand reliable troops, with whom to retake the fort. Can you have them under arms in the Place de la Concorde in two hours from now?"

The chiefs of legions looked each man at his neighbour, and hesitated. At last one of the boldest of the malcontents stepped forward, and answered for the rest. "It is possible, citizen delegate," he said, "that we could find you these troops; and even that we could have them under arms in two hours from now; but until we have your promise that you will abandon all thought of interfering with the existing organization of the National Guard, we shall refuse to find them."

"Ah!" said Roland, "it is a mutiny, then, that I have to deal with. Well, look from that window; and in the courtyard you will see waiting for you those who will



presently make to you the only answer I shall ever have for mutineers."

A dead silence prevailed among the chiefs of legions when the last of their number had obeyed. In the courtyard of the Ministry of War there was drawn up a large firing-party, that had been selected, not from the National Guard, but from among the troops of the line who had deserted to the insurgents.


"You look pale, citizens," said the delegate of war. "I can understand that the sight is a disagreeable one to officers who are so little accustomed to go under fire. Citizen Collet, you are still possessed, I hope, of the discretion that the other day at Vanves kept you out of the way of the shells. Is it to keep you now beyond the reach of bullets? It will, if you agree to find me a thousand of the troops I want."

"Two, citizen,—two," stammered Collet. "I will go at once to collect them."

"My chief of the staff will spare you that trouble. As you have given me the pleasure of your company without my seek-

ing for it, you will excuse me if I do not at once deprive myself of it. Entrust the order for the assembling of your legion to the citizen Séguier. I perceive, citizens," said Roland, looking to the remaining chiefs of legions, "that there are others here who have orders to give."

The long, bright May afternoon wore but slowly away for the various occupants of the Ministry of War. In the courtyard, the troops placed there by the delegate waited orders; and from their temporary prison within the building the chiefs of legions hurriedly despatched to the battalions under their command instructions to assemble without delay in the Place de la Concorde. Their doubts of the inclination of the drunken, disorderly militia of the Commune to quit in any such numbers as were required their favourite barracks, the *cabarets* of the city, where they were probably at the moment drinking through their daily thirty sous, were too evident to escape the delegate of war. When the two hours that he had allowed them for muster-




ing the forces with whom he was to attempt the retaking of Issy had more than expired, his chief of the staff presented himself to report that not five thousand National Guards were yet collected in the Place de la Concorde. "The most pitiful-looking rascals in Paris," was Séguier's estimate of the quality of these troops."

"I will give you one hour more," said Roland to his prisoners, "and then—— What is it, Séguier? Who did you say has asked to see me?"

"That Englishwoman, *mon colonel*, whom you——"

"Ah!" said Roland, "I will go to her at once. Take my place here while I speak with her. In the case of any attempt to leave the Ministry, citizens, this officer has his orders."


"You are long in coming, madam," he said, on entering the ante-room where a heated figure in a crushed bonnet and draggled finery waited for him. "Did you find it a hard task to get back into Paris?"



“Hard, sir!” cried the lady. “If it hadn’t been for dear Lord Ralston speaking to Marshal MacMahon about me, I’d have been at Versailles yet. ‘This is the wife of my friend, Hodgson Sprott,’ says his lordship to the marquis—marshal, I mean. ‘Those shocking Communists have shut her husband up in Mazas, and she wants to get into Paris on the chance of saving him.’ ‘Ah!’ says the marshal, between two pinches of snuff, ‘Englishwomen are always brave, I know.’”

“I don’t want the history of your adventures, but the letter you are bearer of. You have brought me one, I hope?” said Roland.

“Yes, sir,” his visitor rejoined, searching for it; “and taken as much care of it as if I had been a Queen’s messenger. “It’s not a long one; I saw your mother:—One would almost say she was an Englishwoman, I’m sure—writing it; and it was all she could do to get her pen across the paper. ‘Poor soul,’ says I to myself, ‘you’ll soon put ‘Finis’ to the narrative




of your life.' Lord! such a place as that château is for any poor creature to die in. There, colonel, there is what she has written to you."

The letter bore neither signature nor date. It consisted of a few almost illegible words feebly put on paper by a hand tremulous with the approach of death. "Come to me, Louis, I am dying."

"Lord, sir!" said the lady, "one would think you were going to faint. I'm sure, you have no more colour than that paper."

The other, without attending to her, took ink and paper, and wrote out the order for her husband's release from Mazas. "There, madam," he said, handing it to her, "is what will restore your husband to you; and if his temporary loss of liberty has taught him prudence, the first use he will make of its recovery will be to leave Paris. Vautrain," calling one of his staff, "go with the *citoyenne* to Mazas, and see that the order she is the bearer of is attended to."

When he was alone, Roland spread out



his mother's letter before him, and sat thinking. "Come to me, Louis, I am dying!" Ambition, patriotism even, died within him as he listened to that cry. For the moment he forgot red flag and tri-colour; and, for the haunting vision of a German army encamped under the walls of Paris, and watching Frenchmen slaying Frenchmen, he saw but the eyes that yearned for his coming in that far-away homestead of the Cevennes. He snatched the paper to his lips, and kissed it. "I have sinned," he murmured, "I have sinned. They will say of me, 'He has fled, the coward, when he saw that all was lost'—well, that will be the punishment of my sin. And I have done nothing for my country—nothing!" Tears, burning as those shed in hell, rose in his eyes, and seared them; and with a despair as if of one from whom light was passing, he saw fade out for ever the hope that had once been his of saving France.


Relieved from the guard that he kept upon the chiefs of legions, Séguier rode off

from the Ministry of War to the Place de la Concorde, and galloped back presently with threatening tidings. "The Commune," he reported to Roland, "have ordered General Henry to take command of the battalions in the Place de la Concorde, and arrest you instantly. It is said that you have shot, or are on the point of shooting the chiefs of legions; and a court-martial is already named to try you, with Bergeret as its president. What orders do you give me?" the chief of the staff concluded.

"None," said Roland, pressing his hand.

"Au revoir, mon ami."

He hurried up to his garret bedroom, and changed his dress for that of a civilian. In turning to leave the room, his unhooked sabre, lying where he had thrown it on entering, caught his eye. "Ah," he said, lifting the sheathed weapon, and handling it as if even now it was scarcely in his heart to let it go, "if I could have drawn you once—but once—against the Prussian!"



“Where has our blonde Cesarion fled to?” Pyat asked next morning in the *Vengeur*. “For the sake of such honour as his treasons to the Commune have left him, let us hope the road he has taken is not that of Versailles.”

END OF VOL. II.

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